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HEIR TO
TWO FORTUNES

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KNOWLEDGE IS THE WING WHEREWITH WE FLY TO HEAVEN

HEIR TO TWO FORTUNES.

A Novel,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

THE AUTHOR

OF

"THE LIFE OF THE MOSELLE."

VOL. III.



London:
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HEIR TO TWO FORTUNES.

CHAPTER I.

WRECKED ON A CORAL REEF.

Away from London, from Remington Place; away from smoke and dirt, from bricks and stucco, from street music and the postman's knock; away from all the cares and miseries of modern life, from all its joys and comforts. Hundreds of miles away from anywhere; thousand of miles away from any continent. The brilliant deep blue sea all round, the sky without a cloud, the island itself one mass of verdure, from which the tall curved stems of the cocoa nut palms raise their plume-like foliage to the heavens. It seems a very paradise; such a place as Adam may have walked and slept in, as Eve may have wandered in; a place where together our first parents might have found all things good. It seems a place wherein mankind





how Seton and he had talked of such things years ago—he could remember a talk they had once had when sitting in one of Seton's houses; they had agreed that if that house was only on a desert island they would have been completely happy; they had pictured to each other, in such word painting as they could muster, the delights of such an island; they had planned what they would do, how they would hunt for shell fish, knock down birds, build a fire and cook these birds, eat such jovial meals as only wrecked mariners or western hunters could assimilate; together they would shoot or snare birds and beasts, they would, by patience and skill, tame the forest animals, and make them quite domestic; together they would explore and, perhaps, find treasures left there by pirates, and long forgotten; together they would fashion strange but beautiful garments of skins and feathers; they would spear fish and gather fruits. Yes, together—and the thought came to the shipwrecked man that he was alone.

Then he rose up. Was he indeed alone? Surely some of the others had escaped as well as he; he

himself had seen two boats get clear away from the vessel before she lurched over and went down. He climbed a tree, or rather he got a little way up one of the smooth barked trees, and from that vantage ground he saw over the bar at the mouth of the little bay; beyond there was only the ocean, not a speck of anything but blue heaving sea; all round the bay nothing was visible but a dense mass of greenery. He came down from the tree before he had wholly finished his survey, he could hold on to its slippery sides no longer. For a while he sat down leaning his back against the palm tree; he longed for some of those things that he and Seton had spoken of as sure to abound; he wished for that cupboard in Seton's tree which formerly had held ginger beer, cakes and toffy; such refreshments now would have been very welcome. He began to thirst, the sun's heat grew greater, so he rose and turned into the forest; he fancied he heard a sound of falling water, and he endeavoured to reach the place from which that sound proceeded; cocoa nuts were in plenty far above his head, but he was unable to climb to them. Now he felt he

must drink, but the tall trees mocked his efforts; please God the water was not a fantasy of his imagination.

He wandered on and on, into the depth of the forest; at last he emerged on a broad green mead, through which a small river was flowing. This stream spread into pools, clear pools in which many strange fish were gliding. At the head of the valley he could see the gleam of falling water, and the sound fell refreshingly upon his ears now that he felt sure the sound was really that of water. All about the valley were clumps of trees of various hues, and in the distance far above their heads, there was a peak which might be part of a mountain or only a jutting rock, he could not tell; by this time he was dazed with thirst and weariness, he was just conscious of the trees, the greensward, the waterfall and the valley, but his thoughts were fixed on the water, the blessed limpid water that was flowing sweet and cool before him; he laid flat down and drank to repletion, then he gathered himself into the shadow of a thick bush, composed his limbs upon the soft turf—and slept.

* * * * * *

When he awoke again, the moon was shining brightly, and he felt very hungry; on the previous day he had gnawed some leaves and fruits, but he had met with none that seemed suitable to his palate, and thirst had so much predominated that he had pressed forward to where the sound of water came from. Now he felt very hungry indeed; if he could only catch some of those fish he had seen swimming—surely there must be some fruits that were edible—edible or not, he would eat some—so he rose to search, and began tightening his waist-band. While thus comforting his stomach, he thought he heard sounds very much like laughter. Were there hyenas there, or jackals? No, these sounds were surely human; "where laughter is, there is contentment; where contentment is there must be food," argued Guss; so he set off in the direction whence these sounds proceeded. Carefully he advanced; taking advantage of the shadows, he stole from bush to bush; at length he came upon a scene such as he had imagined, but never hoped to see.

Before him was a pool of water; water he knew it must be, but it looked in that bright moonlight like a sheet of opal with silver spray

glittering upon it; the spray was caused by dusky figures that laughed and splashed within it. It was a little pool, some fifty feet across, and he could see more figures clustered on the far side. Those bathing in the pool were diving, splashing, and singing, laughing and playing games like children. While he stood watching them, two of these bathers came to land close to where he was concealed in the shadow of a great tree; then he saw that they were not children—at any rate these two were not—but girls full grown, with flowers upon their heads; great wreaths of hair were tightly plaited round these heads, in them the flowers were fixed, and trailing sprays depended from the plaits; the flowers and sprays were glittering with the water; no heads could have been more fully dressed—but, alas, the dressing began and ended there, for no clothing obscured the gleaming of their limbs in the full moonlight.

Guss rubbed his eyes; had he dropped in on the Paradise of Mahomet, or was he still sleeping? It was as though Seton and he had been tasking their inventions and, sleeping, realized that which they had imagined—not that they had much

cared about female beauties in those days, they had rather scorned the female sex; only there had been such things as lovely Indians, peerless maidens, and sweet syrens—they were adjuncts to robbers in their caves, rovers on the deep, and warriors in their strongholds. Guss rubbed his eyes, and the more he rubbed the clearer he saw that these two insufficiently clad females were really such, and not visions of the night; he stood listening to these two girls, who, quite unconscious of his presence, laughed and chattered on. The voices were very sweet, and the scene was full of poetry, but—his stomach craved for food.

He hardly liked to appear before these girls while they were so—slenderly clad; but his need was urgent, he was quite empty, and really it seemed as if they would chatter on all night. At last he gave a hem and then he coughed, walking into the moonlight at the same time. The girls were by no means abashed at sight of this stranger, neither were they frightened. On the contrary, they came to him, and spoke with sweet voices; then they touched him, and laughed. Finding his speech unin-

telligible, they made signs to him to wait there; then they plunged into the pool.

When they arrived at the far side of the water such a medley of voices arose, that Guss had half a mind to run for it, but his stomach overruled his legs, food it must have. So the legs stood firm, with just the slightest shrinking at the knees; they might be cannibals—well, live and let live, eat and be eaten—better to die with a full stomach, than to exist a little longer with that flat vacancy that now was troubling him. He stood firm, and awaited the upshot of all the talk that was going on.

The talk ended, and the water became alive with swimmers; soon he was surrounded by the whole party, each of whom proceeded to array him or herself in garments that had been kept dry by being done up in bundles, and carried on the head; the bundles were not large, and easily conveyed.

Guss was much poked and stared at; at last one of the two girls he had first seen took him by the hand, then her fellow secured his other hand, garlands were thrown over him, and flowers placed upon his head; then the whole

party moved on through the moonlight in procession; dances were performed as they went along, and songs were sung. Guss felt very classical, very empty, and very uncertain as to whether he was a species of bridegroom, or a sort of ox going to the slaughter.

They arrived at a rock, over which the water he had heard in the distance was falling in a sheet of silver; there the procession halted, and they all sat down. One who took the lead addressed him in a speech which was as Coptic to poor Guss, who knew not how to reply. Nature, however, prompted him; he stood up, and pushed in his stomach with both hands, not that it required more flattening, but in token of its being empty. Conjunctively with this pantomime, he said "hungry," and further added words synonymous with hunger in all languages that he knew, but it availed him nothing; they only supposed that this was the salutation of the land he came from. Guss had recourse to further pantomime; he poked his finger into his mouth, and pretended to eat, swallow, and enjoy that morsel; the islanders regarded this as a curious ceremony, perhaps expressive of

delight at having met them. "What abominable idiots they are," said Guss; then he snatched up grasses, bit and spat them out, caved his stomach in still more by bending his spine. At last exhausted, he sat down, and the whole party laughed with pleasure at the entertainment he had afforded them; one more speech from the leader of the party followed, then they all turned to eat, a process that Guss's pantomime had delayed; he had not only done no good by his ingenious pantomime, but he had actually prolonged his sufferings.

Now, however, they were ended; he was supplied with a calabash of what seemed like tapioca or sago mashed into a pulp, bunches of fruit were given him, fruits of which he knew nothing, but they tasted good; greedily he bolted the grain, with avidity he munched up the fruits; more grain was given him, more fruits, and cocoa nuts were brought in plenty; his companions, the two girls, vied with each other in tearing the thick yellow rind from these nuts, and cracking them. Then he swallowed the delicious milk, so sweet and soothing to his poor dry stomach; these two girls sat, one on each

side of him, and paid him every possible attention, showed him how to string the fruits, so as to leave only the parts eatable, patted him on the back, and encouraged him to eat more; and finally, when fish from the stream were handed round, they took them alive as they were, popped them head foremost into their mouths, and while the tails waggled in the moonlight, their pearly teeth crunched up the head and shoulders, sucked in the middle part, and put an end to the waggling of the tails by swallowing them as though they were delicious sweetmeats fitly crowning the simple repast. Guss was unequal to these delicacies; he would have done much to please his entertainers, but his education had not included the eating of live fish; bivalves, or even univalves, were possible, but every one knows such things are wholly different. Seton and he, in their wildest imaginings, had never got beyond mussels as live food.

Fish alive had crowned the repast as far as eating went, but there was yet to come a drink; a huge calabash was now produced, and lesser cups were dipped into the fluid it contained; these were handed from one to the other, a large

cocoa nut cup was presented to Guss, and in it there was a thick liquid. The head man made a speech and drank, the rest followed his example as far as the drinking went. Guss thought the liquid very nasty, and would have taken but little from his cocoa nut had not his especial maidens signed to him to continue drinking; as he had been uncourteous about the fish, he thought it better to oblige in this matter, so on the principle that causes people to tipple down their medicine, he drank off the contents of his cup; the girls laughed and emptied theirs; he recollected seeing this, then a blank fell on him—he remembered nothing more.

When he again awoke he had a horrid sort of half torpid feeling on him, and he felt a pricking in the extremities, a sort of pins and needles in his joints; he turned over and fell asleep again.

Finally he woke up; it was nearly evening, so he must have slept all through the night and day; he was lying in the shade near the great rock, and close to the waterfall. Thinking a bathe would do him good, and seeing no one, he divested himself of his clothing, and plunged into a pool just out of the curves caused by the

falling water; the coolness was delicious, and he floated and paddled about for some time, enjoying himself immensely.

On leaving the water he found his clothes had vanished, leaving not a shirt behind; from the bushes came sounds of laughter; evidently those girls had carried off his things. He was bashful, and retired once more to the cover afforded by the water. The girls, however, were not bashful, but came forward as he retreated, and waved a long strip of what looked like yellow matting of a fine texture; this they laid down, stood laughing at him for a while, and then they retreated to their hiding place. Guss understood that he was to clothe himself in this insufficient garment, as he had noticed that the males of the party wore strips of this sort of stuff round them; so he came to land and wound up as much of his limbs as possible in this piece of matted fibres. Having finished his toilet, he began to think that really though light it was not inelegant; he had good legs and arms, and this costume showed them off to great advantage. And so the girls seemed to think, for they advanced from the bushes, patted him, gently pinched him, examined his white

skin narrowly, then apparently satisfied with their inquisition, they put flowers upon his head, and garlands round his neck.

Overpowered and blushing, Guss stood between the two girls quite abashed; they were not bad looking, had small feet and hands, luxuriant hair and pleasant voices; they were crowned with flowers, and clothed in sort of night gowns of brilliant hues; the fatter of the two wore an orange, the slimmer and more graceful, a rose-coloured garment; they were very nice savages, but that was just it—they were cheerful, and agreeable to look at, but intellect was wanting to their broad-featured faces.

Guss did not mind the want of covering to his calves and shoulders, but he did regret his shoes; when his conductors took him by his arms, and essayed to lead him forward, he pointed at his white feet, and at the prickly matters in the grass, and produced a look of agony which much pleased the girls, but at the same time had the desired effect, for one of them ran off and shortly returned with the missing shoes; then Guss resigned himself to his situation, he put on the shoes, and thought that if he was to be wrecked

at all, this island was quite the right place to be wrecked on.

They led him away through the forest; in the shade of the trees the sun was not too hot, the climate was delightful—really such captivity as this might well be borne; the food had not been bad, except that cup of beastly drink that had been forced on him, and those live fish. He and his escort had gone but a very little way when they came out on an opening, in the centre of which stood some huts, just huts made of twisted grasses and roofed with broad leaves.

Round these were squatted men, women and children, probably his co-feasters of last night; they were eating their evening meal, which was a repetition of last night's food. Guss, with his two attendants, one of whom he found out was named Ayhuooa, and the other Keeauwa, sat down and eat; no calabashes of the acrid drink he had suffered from before were handed round to-night, but there were plenty of the juicy cocoa nuts, so the repast was very pleasant to him. The whole assembly laughed and sang and chattered far into the night. Also a sort of dance was performed, which was not in itself pretty,

but with the surroundings of feathery palms, balmy air, bright moonlight, and delicious odours from innumerable flowers, was like a page from the very wildest tales of adventure he had ever read.

At last they all slept peacefully, each lying on a mat of soft rushes.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE ISLAND, AND RESCUE.

Two or three days were passed in the same sort of perpetual holiday. They all lay about idly during the heat of the day, and in the evening sang and danced. Provision seemed to be had for the pulling of it from the trees, all except the grain stuff, which was brought from some other place in bundles tied up in fresh leaves, and pounded into pulp by the women. Where the huts stood there was no sign of cultivation, the place seemed like a temporary camp rather than a permanent village, as in fact it was.

Guss was not expected to do anything, only he was not allowed to stray beyond eye reach, in all other respects he was treated as an honoured guest rather than a captive; if he attempted to wander into the bush, either Ayuhooa or Keeauwa was sure to be at his elbow in a moment. Of his own clothes he saw nothing, but the waist cloth was pleasant wear enough.

The islanders, both men and women, seemed to find his white skin a constant source of interest; they never seemed to tire of stroking, pinching, and poking it, always ending with laughter and apparent approbation.

At last a change took place; the whole party packed up, if we may use that term for fastening their mats and calabashes to their girdles; then the march began, Guss being specially escorted by Keeuawa and Ayuhooa. The tramp was long, but towards evening they emerged from the forest and came out on a scene that quite repaid the exertion of the march.

Rocks of many hues hemmed in a little cove, spread with pure white sand, over which rippled a small stream of clearest water, shallow and gurgling; in front was the sea of a beautiful turquoise colour. The sky was of a clear rose tint; on either hand were jutting cliffs of red stone, these were surmounted and surrounded by masses of vegetation, such as cannot be conceived of by those who have never been in tropical lands. The carpet of white sand gave place to emerald green as the little vale receded from the sea, this green was soft thick turf kept bright by rivulets

that were led there from the parent stream, and sparkled refreshingly among the mossy herbage. Here and there were huts erected on mounds raised a foot or two above the level. These huts were, like those they had left behind them, made of twisted grasses, only the roofs of these were reed instead of leaves.

Filling the mouth of the little harbour, and straight before where Guss was standing, was an islet, which in the evening light seemed like a very bower of the Paphian goddess, so rich and soft were the colours of its trees and rock. From this islet and from the rocks that hemmed in the valley shot up tall cocoa palms, with their smooth twisted stems and their feathery heads now motionless in the still air.

Round the huts were trees laden with fruits; ferns and flowers were there in profusion. It really did seem to Guss, as he stood entranced with the beauty of the spot, that Eden was come again, or, perhaps, in these distant seas it never had been lost. The natives, too, seemed kindly and fit tenants of such a garden; the Eves were not exactly fair, but with their glossy skins, their splendid hair, upright carriage, and lythe forms,

they were very passable. Unfortunately for Guss, these Eves reciprocated his notions; they thought that he, too, was passable; his skin was white, and his features not broad enough, but still he seemed a straight well made fellow, and might be turned into a tolerable husband; probably his funny white skin would darken—that of other whites who had visited the island and remained there had done so.

This opinion concerning his merits was communicated to him by a half-bred man who had been brought from a neighbouring village.

From this man Guss learnt that no other had landed from the "Irresolute," indeed he knew nothing of that ship, no one at all had landed on the island for many weeks. The man also told him that, by the laws of the tribe he was now with, women chose their husbands, and both Ayuhooa and Keeauwa had chosen him. This accounted for the particular interest they had taken in him, and was very complimentary. It was certainly a huge relief to be sure that he was not to be eaten, but next to being eaten, marriage, without any inclination for that state, seemed to Guss to be the greatest evil that could befall

him. His pride, too, was taken down by being told that it was probably not so much because they admired him that these two wished for him, but there was a remarkable scarcity of young men, owing to the devastation of the tribe by small-pox, which had been brought among them by a white sailor who had run from his ship and taken refuge with the kindly islanders.

It was to ascertain whether Guss had marks of that dread enemy that they had so poked and examined his skin.

The interpreter told him there was no chance of evading such a marriage; indeed, he would have been married at once had it not been that both girls wished for him, and they had equal claims, as together they had found him. This being so, it was necessary for the tribe to meet to decide which was to have him. "Why don't you want to marry one of them?" the interpreter said; "they are both young, and Ayuhooa is very plump."

Guss thought if he must choose, that obesity would be rather an objection than otherwise; a good fat fowl now, or a sheep, would be very nice, but a fat girl he did not wish; confound

them, he did not want a thin one either; if it came to that, he preferred remaining a bachelor.

He eagerly questioned the interpreter as to opportunities of escaping from the island, which he found was much larger than he had supposed; but, clearly, the chances of escape were few and far between; a vessel might touch at the island to-morrow, or might not do so for many months; besides, they would march him off into the interior if a vessel came, and keep him there till it had departed.

With a deep sigh, Guss resigned himself to his fate; the interpreter left him, and the girls once more took possession of him. Now that he knew the facts of the case, he easily perceived that, through all their playfulness, there ran a strain of jealousy; if Ayuhooa threw a garland over his head, Keeauwa bound one round his waist; if one patted him, the other stroked him; if one pinched, the other pulled; it was, clearly, share and share alike till the decision was arrived at. He took stock of their respective charms; Keeauwa was pleasanter and less broad of feature, also she was not fat—in other respects they were much alike; Ayuhooa decidedly was

fat, and evidently prided herself on this obesity, rotundity of stomach being, in her tribe, a symbol of beauty that was much admired: if he must choose, Keeauwa would be the one "to bless and cheer" him, but he was not to be the chooser but the chosen.

They served him with supper, and then he was taken to a hut and left to think over his approaching fate—— And this was to be the end of his aspirations, the crown of his life; the joy of his heart was to be a South Sea Islander; he who had set his hopes on no, he would not even name her in conjunction with these dusky maidens was to be contended for by two savages, who only cared for him because he savages were lacking: confound them they did not even appreciate his merits or his beauty. He fell asleep thinking his lot was very hard.

Early next day a solemn assembly was held under an immense tree. Guss, covered with garlands, was seated on a pile of mats; at his right hand was the interpreter, and on his left were displayed the shirt, trowsers, and under garments in which he had escaped from the wreck, and

which had been taken from him while he bathed. These were spread out on a sort of towel horse, and were surmounted by a pole from which his braces, neckcloth, and pocket handkerchief fluttered in the breeze; the red braces, black neck tie, and white handkerchief formed a tricolour that was very effective in spite of the sea water having somewhat spotted the tie and braces. Behind him were the would-be brides.

All was arranged in a most sumptuous manner; each native, squatted on his mat, was garlanded; the ladies in the outer circle were clad in robes of every hue, that now hid and now revealed their dusk proportions. It was observable that the fat ones allowed this grace to be perceptible, while those of skinnier make puffed out their robes as though more flesh might be beneath them than there really was; they all had splendid hair coiled and twisted into most fantastic shapes and set off by brightest flowers.

The chief, an aged man, wore, in addition to the universal waistcloth of the men, a handsome waistcoat adorned with beads of many colours, and down his back flowed a scarf made of bird's feathers, very soft and beautiful; he

was seated on a bucket turned upside down, the edges covered with mats enough to prevent their cutting his sacred person; behind him was his banner, on a pole; this banner, being a brilliantly striped petticoat, made a very good appearance.

On either side of the chief was a pile of fruits, grain, and cocoa nuts: in the centre of the circle formed by the chief and people there was a great calabash. The proceedings were opened by two men lifting this empty calabash and handing it in turn to each female; these had been provided with pieces of some sort of root which they masticated, and as the calabash came round each spit their portion of masticated root into the bowl; when all had done this, water was poured upon the mass, and the calabash was left standing in the centre of the circle.

Now advanced Keeauwa, and in a speech of some length, she urged her claim to Guss; the interpreter kept him informed of the drift of her oration. She claimed that she had seen Guss first, and that she liked him; she urged that she was the oldest, and, therefore, ought to be married before her friend; she spoke much of her

deceased relatives and their merits; finally, she reminded them that she was the last of her family, and if not married soon, her immediate branch of the community might die out.

Some applause followed her address, and Guss felt feebly happy that the slim one was to be his bride, and not the fat; of the two, he certainly preferred Keeauwa, so he smiled on her as she returned to her place behind him, and there resquatted.

Ayuhooa now came forward; her speech was much shorter than her friend's had been, but it was apparently conclusive, for when she finished the whole assembly gave an appreciative grunt, and two very plain old females came to Guss and led him to where Ayuhooa stood by the calabash. It turned out that she had said she had dreamt last night that a very old chief had come to her, leading the captive by the hand, and adjured her to marry him in spite of his pale skin, as, by doing so, she would prevent a recurrence of the awful calamity that had swept off so many of their tribe; "therefore," she added, "I claim him, not because I like white men, but I devote myself to the public good, so shall the Spirit save us all from the bad disease."

It is not to be wondered at that Ayuhooa gained the day—she appealed to the general selfishness; while Keeauwa only rested her claim on individual advantage; the latter had talked rubbish about her family, her wishes, and her age; the former had shown the assembly that all would benefit if Guss was handed over to her.

Keeauwa cast many a lingering look of love and jealousy at Guss and Ayuhooa, as they stood by the calabash. This vessel was now lifted, and first the chief drank, then it was handed to Guss, who, having grown reckless, now that the fat one had secured him, took a long pull at the unsavoury contents; finally, all the men drank, and Guss was led away to a new hut by the two old women; there he lay down, and soon was quite oblivious—the drink had overpowered him.

When, after hosts of troubled dreams had come and gone, the mists of sleep were finally dispersed, and he regained his senses, he found the two old women sitting by him. No sooner was he wide awake, than these two fell upon him, and began kneading his limbs, and crack-

ing all his joints, they slapped him on the spine, and nubbled him all over. He put up with this operation meekly; he was so subdued in spirit, that he made no resistance; he was no longer his own property, he belonged to Ayuhooa.

With final wrenches and bangs, the old ladies finished, grinned on him, and left the hut. "What next, I wonder?" thought poor Guss.

However, the next thing, was agreeable enough; the interpreter entered, and brought him a dish of most delicious fish, cooked, and other food; these he eagerly devoured. Then the man told him that this was his last day of freedom; all the preliminary ceremonies had been gone through, and when the sun went down, Ayuhooa would claim him; the marriage ceremony was very brief, and then he would be known to the island world as Ayuhooa's pale man, and he would be led away to pass the honeymoon. The interpreter departed, and Guss was left to his last hours of solitude.

Meanwhile, jealousy was raging in Keeauwa's heart; she had fancied this white fellow, and had

been honest enough to confess it. She knew that Ayuhooa had lied, and she envied her readiness in lying. Oh, that she had only dreamt too! If she had had the last word, she would have out-dreamt her fellow claimant; she would have dreamt that if the pale man was not given to her, the Spirit would swallow the whole island, chief and people. But it was too late—alas! Ayuhooa had triumphed—there was no way to prevent the union—the abominable union; there was not even a night left to dream in now. She sat on one of the red rocks that jutted into the turquoise sea—suddenly a path was opened to her, it was yet possible to prevent Ayuhooa getting him; for there had come in sight a boat full of strange men. Seeing her sitting on the rock, they pulled towards her, making signs of peace and amity. Joy was in Keeauwa's heart; she paused but a moment, then signing to the rowers to pull into a little creek, she darted to the hut in which Guss lay shampooed and melancholy, prepared for the altar.

Looking up from his couch of soft mats, he saw the lithe form of Keeauwa enter the hut; she eagerly made signs to him, took him by the

arm, and evidently urged him to fly with her. Guss, obtusely enough, only thought that she admired him so much, she wished to steal a march on Ayuhooa, and run off with him to some forest bower; so he refused to stir, as he thought he was legally the property of Ayuhooa, and such flight would only cause trouble. She tried pantomime, but her motions were not more effectual than those of Guss had been when he had wished for food.

The interpreter came in breathless; he too sought to do Guss a good turn, and having seen the white men in the act of landing, he had hastened to tell him of this chance of escape; also he had lately seen much of Ayuhooa and admired her.

Now Guss delayed no longer; he dashed towards the rocks, on the far side of which the boat was lying. Keeauwa led the way. Behind he heard cries, and as he gained the rocks, looking back he saw Ayuhooa in full pursuit, also some others. Her fat was against her, and the start too long; so Guss had entered the boat —which was manned with sailors belonging to the clipper, "Star of Hope"—when Ayuhooa arrived upon the rocks.

The boat pulled off, and with the last glimpse Guss caught of his would-be brides he saw they were engaged in tearing at each other's hair. His best wishes were with Keeauwa, and probably her superior activity gave her the upper hand; still weight will tell. The issue of the conflict Guss never knew.

He had lost a set of underclothing, his braces, and his waistcoat—but he had also lost a bride, and gained a waistcloth, so he was very happy.

The "Star of Hope," in which it will be remembered Garston had sailed for New Zealand, had been short of water, and had sent its boats to search for some upon this nameless island, just in time to preserve poor Guss from matrimony.

CHAPTER III.

ON BOARD THE "STAR OF HOPE."

MEETING in this strange way, and at this distance from England, Garston and Guss were as old friends. At home they had known but little of each other; on board the "Star of Hope" they were almost as old familiars. In Avonshire they would barely have spoken if they met; beneath the Southern Cross they were intimate at once.

How curiously friendships spring up, how readily they are cast aside when anything checks the old intercourse; in all ordinary friendships, there is more of accident and use than of real liking or close assimilation; so friends fall apart as easily as they came together. A man, who has perhaps risked his life for a comrade in a hunting party, who has shared with such comrade his last ounce of tobacco; who has carried him when sick or received like favours from him—that very man will pass his old comrade with just a nod of recognition, when, possibly, not

many months afterwards, he meets him in Regent Street or Pall Mall.

We have become so cosmopolitan, that we daily meet and fraternize, then part, possibly never again to hear or see the friend so prized and necessary a short time back. It is all accident; friendship, so called, is a thing of chance and opportunity. You come together, you know not how; you cleave to one another just because you are together; you laugh, talk, walk, hunt, smoke or shoot together, because you have, for the time being, similar pursuits, and happen to be at the same place, or to form one of the same party. Years afterwards, some one says to you, "Do you remember A. or B.?" you call him up from the depths of your memory, and say of your old friend, "Ah, yes, not a bad sort of fellow." Just so, when years again have rolled away, you will speak of your present interrogator who now is the reigning friend of your bosom.

Guss and Garston were, for the time, quite intimate; together they paced the deck, and talked of those far away in Avonshire. Garston gave as his reason for being on board the "Star of Hope,"

which was bound for Auckland, his distaste for the cramped forms and ceremonies of English life. He said nothing of his failure, or his losses; he spoke only of England as a place where a man had no room to move, where there was no chance, except for such as had great wealth, or powerful connections. Güss would laugh, and say—

"That sort of thing is our complaint in the navy; only with us it is reduced to one element —interest. If we had the wealth, we should not be there at all, for the pleasure is very slight."

"In your case, the service must have some attractions; for you, at any rate, can afford to live without working, and without interest; you do not, I fancy, require to pick up money like a poor grubbing solicitor."

"Just as you say, Garston; I like your term, 'grubbing,' you lawyers do that very effectually, don't you! picking up the six-and-eightpences! If we were at home, you would as likely as not send me in a bill for this very talk; why, you are the fellows who turn up gold and silver with your tongues—much better ploughing than we can do, who only turn up the waves that never give back any of the treasures that they hold."

"You are thinking of barristers—it is they who wield the tongue, we only drive the pen; we do what we can, and doubtless most of us do pick up some of the gold and silver that you mention. But a man wants more than that—he wants to live while young, not to pass his time in laying up, until years have sapped away his powers of enjoyment; no use ploughing—to use your simile—without you can reap and eat of the fruits of your labour; so, Tarleton, give me a new country—a country where a fellow with a head on his shoulders may jump at once into a place where he can command the luxuries of power, and enjoy the fruits of his exertions while still able to appreciate the good things his talents have procured him."

"I don't know how you are going to jump into place and power in New Zealand; I fancy you will find the fellows there as tough to oust, and as little ready to give you a leg up, as those you have left behind in England. And as to enjoyment, by gum! I don't know how you would spend your money there when you had got it—they all go back to England to do that."

Garston could only sigh, as he thought of

the luxuries he had lost for ever; he could never more return to England. It was fortunate if New Zealand was not made too hot to hold him. All his talk was purely false; he did not, in the least, wish for this new country; he did not know what on earth he should do when he got there. He had a few hundreds with which to carry on the war, beyond that he had no idea how he should get a living, he had no plan whatever. All that was to him of delight in life he had left behind him; all he cared for he had forfeited. He was not a man who could take any pleasure in nature; he did not care a straw about the strange sights and deep interest of the new world he was proceeding to; he had no wish to see more of nature than the downs of Epsom or the heath of Ascot. Bricks and mortar, stucco and pavements, theatres, clubs, and restaurants were his paradise. Gaslight was better to him than all the sun, moon, and stars combined.

With what pangs he remembered those luscious hours passed in the haunts he knew so well; the clubs, and those other night haunts that open their doors not widely, but as though their hinges were well oiled, to those who are willing

to pay well for such oiling and such extravagant delights. Stolen kisses are very sweet, but the memory of those bought pleasures was very dear to Garston. When he thought of that night when he won so heavily—when his deal went on and on as if it never would end, and the notes rustled towards him, and the gold chinked heavily as it rose in piles before him. When he recalled that night to his memory, and thought of the comfortable club, where everything that man could devise in the way of food or drink was brought at the shortest notice—then, indeed, he mourned for that which he had lost. He could almost weep at his folly; he bitterly reproached himself for having striven for so much that he had lost all. Why could not he have been content? If that good thing for the Derby would but have come off; if the "Compressed Rails and Sleepers Company" had but succeeded, he would have given up gambling. So he thought now; or at any rate, he tried to make himself believe. Not that he would have done so—the man was a gambler at heart, a spendthrift, and a speculator, as well as a liar, a thief, and a scoundrel.

Night after night, Guss walked the deck with

Garston; they had little in common with each other, but they had fallen into the habit of smoking their cigars together, and they got quite confidential. Without telling anything of his losses, Garston spoke of racing, and its fascinations; he found Guss did not take any interest in gambling, loose living, sharp dealing, or gluttony, so he fell back on racing, as a congenial topic. Sailors, in general, are very fond of horses and their doings; Guss, being no exception to this rule, took much interest in hearing of the different races—of the stayers, and the rogues, the matches and the handicaps. In return, he told Garston of his experiences in different lands, especially of those in the island he had just quitted.

"Well, after all, it was not a bad place to get wrecked on."

"By no means, if they would have let one alone; but to insist on marrying you to a young woman like that! By gum! I could not stand that."

"If we had not chanced to have sent in a boat, you would have had to, whether you liked it or not; perhaps half-a-dozen of them, as you say

husbands were scarce. I suppose they are not very particular about polygamy?"

"I hardly know; I should think not, or polyandry, either, if I may judge by Miss Ayuhooa's barefaced conduct."

"And they gave you plenty to eat?"

"Yes, lots of food; no end of fruits, and there was plenty of fish—the beggars eat them raw."

"Upon my word, I don't think I should have minded taking your place."

"What! Ayuhooa and all?"

"Well, you see one must have some drawback everywhere; I daresay she was not worse than the majority of women. I think the place would have suited me admirably."

"Really, I daresay it would, and then you know you could have made yourself a king there much easier than you will be able to become a provincial swell in Auckland. Better to be first in what-d'ye-call-it, than last in the other place, you know."

"And they have plenty of that stuff to drink hawah, do you call it?"

"Oh, yes; lots of it—the women chew it, and they all get as drunk as pigs off it." "Just suit

him," thought Guss, who had observed Garston's love for the bottle.

They often spoke of Seton, and Garston had told Guss all about his law suit, and that things had gone badly with him therein, and were likely to be still worse. He knew of the friendship between Guss and Seton, so he kept his evil feelings to himself, and lied freely; he asserted that he had done all he could to keep Seton from going to law. He wished to be on the best possible terms with Guss, as he thought his connection with him would be very useful on first landing in Auckland. Lieutenant Tarleton was sure to be made much of as a survivor from shipwreck, and he would be available to introduce him into such social circles as he might desire; by his help he might become a member of some club, which would faintly reflect the delights of those he had left in London. Therefore he said nothing regarding Seton but what he thought would be listened to with interest; he carefully pent up his malice. To do this he had to put much pressure on himself, for he had a very deadly hatred to Seton; he had always disliked him, latterly he had detested him. Having done

all he could to ruin him, still he felt that he had not got the better of him; that one blow had avenged all the wrongs he had done him. He had ground Seton beneath the harrows of the law, but Seton had knocked him down. The blow could never be done away with; Seton's pockets might be refilled, probably they would be so at the death of his uncle, but the blow could never be effaced; as long as he lived his ears would tingle whenever he thought of that blow. "If it had not been for hitting my head, by —— I would have killed him," he said to himself, and it is not unlikely that he would have done so.

Whenever he spoke of Seton such thoughts would surge through his brain, and, one night he could not contain himself, but just took a fling at the sort of life that, according to his version of it, Seton was leading. The account he had spread abroad in Avonshire concerning Seton, was the Richmond story supplemented by a great deal of matter that had no origin, save in the vicious workings of his own heart. He had almost got to believe in his lies, and he now related that Seton was leading a life of rioting

in expensive lodgings; that the woman who kept these lodgings was just what those sort of women are—

"You know what they are," he said to Guss; "those sort of women who keep expensive lodgings, and do have fine girls, who may or may not be their daughters, or nieces, or whatever they choose to call them." Here he laughed. Then he continued: "My quiet little parties to Greenwich or to Richmond he quite despised; and as to a friendly rubber of whist in one's own rooms, by gad, Herold quite sneered at the idea. But young fellows will have their fling, and I suppose he reckons on old Warrington's money to put things straight, but what with the law suit, and the other little games, there will be a pretty bill to pay one of these days. I dare say he will settle down quietly enough some day, if that girl does not get hold of him."

"Who do you mean?"

"Well, she is a deuced good-looking girl, and more wonderful things than that have happened."

"What girl are you talking of?"

"Why the girl in the lodgings."

"What had he to do with her?"

"Oh, well, naturally he carried on a little, you know; it is his first fling in London, and I am sure I should not like to throw stones; I don't mean to say he ought to have gone quite so far as he did, but it is difficult to be wise at all hours, no one is, you know we have learnt."

"I suppose, you know he is engaged to my cousin, Miss Clifford?"

"I heard there was an engagement, but I did not know whether it was still on or not."

"Come, Garston, I am interested in this matter, tell me all you know about Herold and this girl; what is her name?"

"She is called Emma Filters, the woman who keeps the house is called Filters."

"Yes, and the girl; come tell me all you know?"

"Oh, I can't tell tales out of school; and, besides, the whole thing may be a pack of lies; or if not, apart from his engagement to your cousin, I myself don't see why he shouldn't have some fun in London, as well as other young men."

"You have said too much not to go further; I must beg you to tell me all you do know."

"My dear fellow, I don't want to make mischief, I am sorry I let the cat out of the bag at all. I did all I could to keep him straight." Here Garston, having got into the swing of the thing, recapitulated all the old lies he had invented and given publicity to in Avonshire.

"Do you know of anything else that passed between Herold and this girl?"

Garston saw by the speaker's manner that there must be something more in the matter than he had previously imagined; so he replied—

"I think I have said enough, and if I was not aware that you and he are friends, I would not have said what I have done; I am very fond of him myself, he and I chummed together a good deal at first, until that girl came between us and he quarrelled with me about the chancery suit."

Garston did not care what lies he told; he knew that his career in England was ended, so he just said what he thought would answer his purpose, quite irrespective of facts.

After a little more fencing with the matter, to excite Guss's curiosity and interest, he said—

"Look here, Tarleton, if you will tell me what

interest you have in the matter, I shall be able to judge whether I ought to tell you more about Herold or not."

"I am interested for the sake of my cousin Miss Clifford."

I think I see, thought Garston; he remembered that all that winter when Seton was at Pau, Guss and Gladys had been together; he knew what such companionship with a pretty cousin is apt to lead to. Pieceing these things on to his interrogator's present manner, the deep interest and excitement he showed in hearing of Seton's supposed *liaison* with the young lady of Remington Place, he rapidly reached the conclusion that such a tale as he was telling could be still more improved, and would be acceptable to one who, in all probability, was a rival in the affections of Miss Clifford.

"Are you her guardian, Tarleton?" he asked, in continuance of the conversation.

"No, only so far as being her nearest male relation entitles me to act as such."

There was a ring in the voice of Guss as he uttered this sentence that made Garston's heart

expand with joy. They were nearing Auckland; the old world was very far away, left behind him for ever; but here was an opportunity, if things were as he imagined; here was a chance of striking Seton a blow that would avenge the one Seton's hand had dealt him in his chambers. From the other side of the globe he might be able to repay the debt he had feared must for ever remain uncancelled. At the same time the information he could give would bind him closer to Guss. So, with just one prefatory question, he commenced a new version of the loves of Emma and Seton.

"You think then I am justified in telling you?"

"I think that if you will tell me all you know it may save much misery hereafter. Guss, although he wished to think as well as possible of Seton, yet remembered but too well the episode in which Maria Hustler played first part; and he thought that Seton might have been led astray; if so, would it not show that he was unfit to have the charge of the future happiness of Gladys? It was possible too, that he was meshed by the

nymph of Remington Place, and had given up Gladys. Could this latter supposition be the truth, how gladly would he comfort and console his cousin; with what delight he would assuage her wounds, pour in the oil of love, take to his heart and cherish his dear one, who no time or space could ever render other than first of all creation in his affections. He had schooled himself to look on her as one lost to him for ever—through the ages she could not be his, he had believed, and now now she might yet be his very own—his wife!

As Garston went on weaving his web of lies, his heart grew light within him. He all along had thought that Gladys cared for him; the promise given to Seton had perhaps been the real reason why she had refused him. It might have been simply because she had given him that promise, and she felt bound in honour to keep to it; it might have been merely that Seton had come first, and she had loved him as young girls do love their first adorers.

He has repented of his young love, gone away to another, may not she be willing to cast out all memory of his love and accept mine instead?

thought Guss; I should never stray, I never could love another.

Garston went on; warming with his subject, he told such tales of Seton's dissipations—narrated so graphically imaginary scenes—threw such warmth into the descriptions of his moonlight meetings, and his midnight revelries in Remington Place—that the blood of Guss grew hot within him, and he longed for vengeance. Was this the man who had gained the promise of the hand of Gladys?—was this his friend, his sworn ally? How grievously he must have altered! Could he have changed so? Did this man speak the truth? and yet what object could he have in inventing such things. There too was the memory of Maria Hustler; in that matter he only knew what Seton had told him. There might have been much more behind; he himself had seen the kissing of Maria Hustler; here was more kissing; it was all of a piece—yes, Garston's story must be true. He had not seen much of his old school friend of late years; he must have sunk from his former level; fallen very low—far beneath the feet of Gladys, much less her hand.

All the heavens were brilliant with the lamps

of night; the good ship "Star of Hope" was speeding fast before the breeze; these two talked on. Guss questioned briefly; Garston replied at much length, seeing the tale he told was eagerly assimilated. He pictured Seton as rioting in London revelry—he could paint such scenes from a very perfect knowledge of them. Emma figured as one of those quiet dangerous women who pass for innocents with those who know no better. Mrs. Filters was depicted as a woman whose own days for fas cinating had passed away but who was ready to assist, for a consideration, others in compassing the ensnarement of such young men as could be led into the toils—if it ended in marriage why all the better; if otherwise, well the young man would pay, and there were plenty more to succeed him when he was cleaned out, or his folly was ended. Garston finished by saying, "Not that it is a thing I for one should make much fuss about; I own to you I have gone my little round in my time, of course before I was engaged; that I own does make a difference. In Herold's case if he really intends to stick to his engagement with your cousin, I do think he has carried the thing rather far; but

after all, you know, they say reformed rakes make the best husbands."

"If he has done a tithe of what you tell me, he shall never marry Glad . . . my cousin."

"Don't excite yourself, Tarleton, there are deuced few young fellows now-a-days who don't know the ropes as well as he does; the only thing is, as I before said, after a fellow is engaged, he ought to haul in; that I grant you, but it is hard to be a saint in London. Now I shall go down and turn in; what a splendid night it is, good night." And Garston slept peacefully, as one who had done a good action, assisted to right the wronged, and punished the evil doer!

There was no rest that night for Guss; he paced the deck till the sun once more shone over the Pacific. Then he went below, but even in his hammock he was followed by thoughts that prevented him from sleeping. He had no reason for distrusting Garston; and what was this thing that he had told him? Seton Herold was a libertine; one who filled up his leisure in dalliance with such a woman as this Emma Filters; with a woman that could be bought; with a creature that could be trafficked in, one who knew no

shame, made no distinction between wrong and right. This man was his friend; this man who drank, rioted, and wantoned in company suited to such things, who had actually taken up his residence in a house presided over by one who was an assister and panderer to such doings, one who lived well and fared sumptuously on the proceeds of such villainous proceedings. This man was his one life-long friend, the affianced husband of his cousin, the forestaller of the love of Gladys for whom he would have died, to save whom from a day's pain he would have sacrificed years of life. This man was engaged to her, might possibly even now have married her. No wonder Guss failed to get his natural sleep.

I will reckon with him; if he were my own brother I would make him pay for such conduct, aye, dearly too, thought fevered Guss. But what if Seton had given up all idea of Gladys, how then? Would he not, instead of taking him to task, gladly condone his misdeeds, even bless him for them; for, if this were so, there would be no obstacle between him and Gladys. If he could obtain her he would forgive Seton, Gladys would not have been wronged, only shown to be far

above such a one as his old friend had proved to be; he would hope and pray that Seton would reform, and he would benefit by his lapse from the paths of virtue and of rectitude.

From that night Guss had but one wish, a wish which grew stronger and stronger as the days went by; it was to stand beside the evil-doer and call him to account; he had but one hope, which was to find that the account so rendered would leave him free to resume the wooing of Gladys that had been so useless as long as she was bound by promise to another.

A very few more days and the "Star of Hope" was safely anchored in Auckland harbour.

Guss went off at once to report himself to the senior officer then upon the station.

Garston landed and established himself at the best hotel the town afforded. The last days of his journey had been very pleasant to him; day by day he had invented fresh lies concerning Seton, and he had known that Guss received them as very truths, and was prepared to act on them as such. Great are lies and greatly they prevail.

* * * * * *

Very little need be said of Garston's after life, it is so easy to see what the end of such a career as his must necessarily be. Kicked out of the club he had got into by Guss's interest; a convicted cheat, a drunkard, and eventually a pauper, no one knew exactly how he died, or when—and no one cared.

CHAPTER IV.

MORE GUESTS FOR MRS. FILTERS.

ONCE more we return to Remington Place, where we left Seton just rounding the narrow point that separates death from life. The fever had departed, but the weakness was so great that for many days the spirit seemed hovering over, rather than dwelling in its tenement and almost unable to maintain that inscrutable alliance which is life. Vital energy seemed absent; the body lay there, but it lay inert; the spirit seemed powerless to affect it; there was a certain muscular motion, and the heart did beat, but that was all. Gradually strength returned, the limbs moved easily, each day brought fresh power, the organic structure was reformed, new particles replaced those that were worn out, a new structure was built up and took the place and form of the wasted tenement that had been the tabernacle of Seton Herold.

Care in the due administration of nourishment

did wonders for him; now that he was able to receive and assimilate nutritious food his tissues and fibres were reformed. Fresh air freely admitted into the chamber ministered to his mental power, as the good broths of Mrs. Filters did to his bodily strength. Above all he had by his side that which encouraged him to exert those energies of the spirit which are so all-important to the well-being of the body; he had always near him, always tending and guarding him, her who he loved so dearly—his Gladys.

Now that the crisis was over, Emma fell back from her office of head nurse, surrendering that place to Gladys, and accepting for herself the lower grade of assistant. It was Gladys who now was to be the leading figure in that sick chamber; Emma was henceforth only a subordinate.

Mrs. Wren and the Sarncombes were gone home again; Gladys was left as a guest of Mrs. Filters. Before Mrs. Wren departed she sought an interview with Mrs. Filters, and made her a most proper apology for her misconception; she explained that Garston had set afloat all manner of stories respecting Remington Place, and

pleaded that knowing nothing of Mrs. Filters, she had been weak enough to believe in his lies; she assured her listener that she deeply repented ever having done so, begged her forgiveness, and as a mark of her perfect faith in her, offered to leave Gladys in her charge.

Mrs. Filters, as she herself expressed it, was torn two ways; she accepted the apology, saw the force of the confidence reposed in her, but she did not the less dislike Mrs. Wren, and was very glad when she departed. She did not want to keep Gladys, her wish was to be rid of the whole lot of them, and she only consented to the proposed arrangement at the earnest entreaty of Emma.

"It is no use your going on about it, mother, I tell you there is nothing at all left between him and me. If he was to go on his knees to me, I wouldn't have him now; I don't wish for other's leavings."

This was a strong statement, and probably not strictly true, but the situation required heroic treatment. Nothing short of such absolute denial of any lingering love for Seton would have satisfied Mrs. Filters.

"Lor,' dear me, and you almost engaged to him! 'Ow ever could it all have been?"

"What nonsense you do talk, mother; don't go on with such foolishness. Mr. Herold and I had a little flirtation that is all; why, among people in his position these things happen every day; there isn't one of them that doesn't have a dozen love affairs. They think nothing of flirtations, nothing at all, why should they; they come on and go off like gloves."

"I don't know where you get such wisdom, Emma, but if it is so, I would rather remain ignorant. Of course I ain't one to say that a young man ain't to pick and choose a bit, or a girl either, for that matter; and I wouldn't say too much about a kiss neither, it is natural; but it is the way of doing it. But there, it is no use of me talking if you say you don't care for him any more."

"Not I, mother, not a bit; he is free to come, and free to go, as far as I am concerned; it doesn't affect me one atom, only we can't let him leave here while he is so weak. Being moved too soon nearly killed him before."

"I am sure I don't want him to go; a nicer young man, and a cleaner skin, I never saw; but the girl, Emma—we don't want the girl surely?"

"Yes, we do want her; it does him good to see her, and she helps nurse. Besides, don't you see, mother, that we can't have him all to ourselves, it would look bad, and give them a handle to get talking again. Now, if she stops here, no one can say anything against you or me; they can't say that we tried to get him. It will show them all that whatever lies flew about, there was no truth in them. Having Miss Clifford in the house will show quite clearly that we didn't try to get him, that I ain't jealous, or wanting to snap him up."

Mrs. Filters was convinced by these arguments that Gladys had better stay on with them. And Emma retired to her chamber to have a good cry for the man she did not want.

Thus it came about that Gladys remained in Remington Place, and was head nurse to Seton.

Naturally of a good constitution, and having no fresh trouble, Seton quickly regained a

portion of his strength. He was soon able to leave his bedroom for the sitting-room, and to look once more on the glories of that state apartment. Still he was very weak, and a mere shadow of his former self.

Gladys read to him from the daily papers, and such light literature as she thought would amuse him. One day she told him how she had passed that dreadful night when all depended on an hour or two; she told him how she had sat waiting for the crisis which would bring death or life.

"I read that story of 'Marina' that Ralph Lacy wrote, and I felt as if you too were sailing away into seas from which you never would come back. I almost fancied that I was as poor Marina, sitting on and on, waiting for a return that never would take place. I sat there waiting and fearing, then I turned, and you were looking at me; I saw you knew me; you uttered my name; you turned towards me, and you smiled. Then I felt that God had given you back to me, my darling. It was such a sudden change from dreaming that I might sit for ever watching for you, and, never seeing you, that I might wait through all the

years, and you would never come; one moment, and my watch was ended, you were come, you were with me, you knew me once again; my prayers were granted, and you were safe. God is very good to us, Seton." And Gladys knelt before him, and put her arms about his still frail body.

While he was thus encompassed, while her bright tresses were still waving on his breast, while they were both oblivious to all outer sounds, the door of the room opened with a crash, and the lost Guss stood before them with scowling brow, and arms folded on his chest.

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Guss had arrived at Liverpool, after a most disastrous voyage, in which he had nearly experienced a second shipwreck. They had been compelled to put into St. Thomas' to repair, as well as they were able, the damages they had received.

This delay had been intolerable to Guss; he was longing to grapple with Seton, and tear from him a confession of his baseness, so that he might lay such confession at the feet of Gladys.

Oh, that he had wings on which to fly and rescue his ill-used cousin from the clutches of the man who had so betrayed her trust in him!

Possibly since Garston had left England, the Chancery suit had been given in Seton's favour, he might have gained his money; then there would be no obstacle to his marrying Gladys. Reeking from the arms of that foul woman, he might have married Gladys. Guss stamped upon the deck at the thought of such a thing. Day after day, and night after night, his fury had increased; as time went by he almost despaired, he would surely be too late.

If, indeed, they were married, he would be able to do nothing, only watch and wait ready to afford poor Gladys such protection as she some day most probably would require. A man who, engaged to Gladys, could do such things as Garston had narrated, would probably sicken of such as her, and longing for fresh infamies he might ill-use, ill-treat, one who stood between him and such evil doings.

The blinding spray would fly over the deck of the vessel, but he heeded it not, except that he fancied he could see in the mist of water

the fair face and shining hair of Gladys; in the voice of the rushing waves and the whistling winds he heard her sweet voice, and her despairing cry, as she called on him for succour.

His shipwreck and anxiety were telling on him; his blood was fevered, and his brain was turned; he had believed the lies of Garston, and he suffered agonies that nearly unseated his reason. In his mind he pictured over and over again those imaginary scenes in which Seton played so prominent a part. Then he would fancy that he saw Gladys flying from Seton to his arms for shelter. He called up visions of that libertine Seton, surrounded by those whose presence made Gladys shrink in horror from her husband; she was as Gerda with the giants, and Seton was as the chief horror, who presided at her immolation. He was, in the fiery dreams of Guss, always triumphant and always villainous. Would this voyage never end, would his day of reckoning never come? He wished he had slain his friend on the day when he first heard that he was the man who Gladys had accepted, on that day when Seton had shown his true colours by kissing Maria Hustler. What a fool he was to

have believed his tale about that young woman; and there might be fifty Maria Hustlers, as indeed it seemed to him there were, for round his bed there constantly were gibbering the light of loves of Seton.

At last the vessel did reach Liverpool; then there was no delay. With fierce haste Guss rushed ashore, and got into the train for London.

He knew exactly where to look for Seton. So as soon as he arrived in London, he took a cab and went to Winchcom Street. Garston had told him that Seton was living there.

Guss was in a fever, and faint for want of food; he had been too excited to think of eating.

When Hann came to the door, and said glibly, "that Mr. 'Erold did not lodge there," he stared at her like a drunken man—and he was drunk with excitement and with rage.

"Not lodge here?" he shouted, "I tell you he does."

"No, he don't, he 'as left hever so long."

"Where is he gone?"

"Are you a friend of 'is?"

"Don't parley with me, answer my question."

"Hoighty, toighty!—well, we are 'igh and mighty; you haint Prince Albert, I suppose?"

"My good girl, here is a sovereign for you, just tell me where he is."

Hann made a pretence of biting the coin, to see if it was good, then said—

"Beg your parding, I'm sure, your Royal 'Ighness, I didn't remember you at first; Mr. 'Erold is at No. 8, Remington Place, just two streets off; you know, don't you cabby?"

"All right," said the driver. Guss jumped into the cab, slammed to the doors, and shouted, "Drive on like the devil, will you!"

Hann stared after the retreating hansom, took another good look at the sovereign, muttered, "I 'opes some more of 'em will turn up and hact according;" then she retired from the door step.

"He shall not for ever evade me," thought Guss; "his misdeeds shall not go unpunished; I will unmask the hypocrite. 8, Remington Place, why, good God, it must be the very house where that woman, and the girl are living! Another moment, and I shall know

all; I must be calm he may have given her up."

The cab dashed on, and in whirling round the last corner, came smash against a post. The driver was thrown off, and the cab upset. Extricating himself from the shattered vehicle, unheeding the injured driver and the panting horse, Guss staggered a few steps onwards; a crowd collected in an instant, and he asked, "Is this Remington Place? which is No. 8?" He was shown the door, and there Mrs. Filters herself was standing; attracted by the noise she had come from the parlour and was standing on the door step.

Guss accosted her, saying, "Does Mr. Herold, Seton Herold, lodge here?"

"Yes, he does," replied Mrs. Filters.

"Then, I will see him, if you please, which is his room—is he in?"

"Yes, he is in, but you can't see him, he"

"Not see him, woman; but I will see him I know all about you, you must be Mrs. Filters; I know all about you, and the girl you call your daughter; let me by"—and Guss pushed past the astounded Mrs. Filters into the passage; there he encountered the maid.

"Which room is Seton Herold's?" he asked; she answered, "the drawing room."

Up the stairs, two at a time, went Guss. On the landing was Emma. "What do you want sir?" she said, seeing a stranger flying up the stairs.

"I want Seton Herold!"

"You must not startle him by rushing in like that."

Guss looked at her, then pointing his outstretched finger at her, he said—

"Away creature, I am come to take him from this den, if not too late, I will tear him from your clutches. Go, and repent."

Emma was appalled; and, fearing she had to do with a madman, rushed down stairs to procure assistance; in the passage she found her mother and the maid in the greatest consternation.

She went into the street, and called for help—that there was a madman in the house.

* * * * * *

The door of the drawing room was opened with a crash, and there stood Guss.

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Turning at the sound, Seton saw his old friend, his almost brother, who they all thought was lost. Gladys rose from her knees, and hastened to her cousin—

"Oh, Guss, dear Guss," and she embraced him.

He put his arm round her, and said—

"Yes, shelter there, poor thing—shelter yourself upon my breast—that monster shall not harm you—that villain shall no more deceive you!"

Seton had risen and taken hold of the stick he still used to support his weakened limbs; he was trying to get to his old friend, to feel sure by actual touch that it was not a dream; that he was indeed given back to them in the flesh. As Guss began his rhapsody, he stood listening with astonishment.

Guss went on—

"Aye, seize your stick; defend yourself, try and kill me as you have already murdered her happiness! I tell you, you have need of all your strength, and all your vigour to defend yourself; if you have injured but one hair of this fair head, by Heaven I will slay

you where you stand! Answer me, are you married? Have you sullied this fair child with your embrace? Answer me Seton Herold. I am not to be put aside or trifled with; I have come from the other side of the world to save or to avenge her."

Gladys, extricating herself from his embrace, returned to Seton, and put one arm round him, as Guss stepped forward. Amazed and frightened, with white cheeks and quivering lips, she stood between the two, shielding Seton with her body from the threatened violence.

Guss stood a moment with vengeance in his face, and his right arm drawn back as if to strike; then his countenance relaxed—he put out both arms as though for succour—swayed forward—and fell heavily upon the floor.

* * * * * *

Emma, her mother, and Mr. Maler who had seen the accident to the cab, and had hastened to render help, entered the room. Guss was lifted up and placed upon the sofa; he had fainted: worn out with excitement, want of

rest and nourishment, he had succumbed; and it was long before he could be brought to.

Seton explained who the intruder was, and surmised that his sufferings had brought on insanity. He knew he must have gone through much from the shipwreck, what else he could not tell; but clearly his brain was for the time affected.

A bed was prepared for him, and Guss was comfortably housed beneath the roof of the outraged Mrs. Filters.

It was many days before he could leave that bed; and ere he did so, he had learnt the truth regarding those things of which Garston had lied so freely. At first he could not bear that any one except Gladys and the doctor should go near him, all others he fancied were hangers on of the disreputable house he believed Mrs. Filters presided over. He was quite delirious, and whether he liked it or not they were obliged to have in a man to manage him.

As he regained his senses, he wondered where he was; he had forgotten about Mrs. Filters and his arrival at her house. "It is not the 'Quarries,' is it, Gladys?" he asked one night.

"No, Guss, we are in London."

"I think I have been dreaming; I thought there was something about Seton and some woman; I feel confused. I have been shipwrecked, haven't I?"

"Yes, and you are not to talk any more to-night, the doctor said you were to take this when you woke." He drank, and fell off to sleep again.

Seton came in and looked at him. "Poor old Guss," he said, "what he must have gone through."

Next day he was better, and soon he became able to understand how things really were—Garston's treachery and his cheating, and his flight from England were all made clear to him. He found that himself, not Seton, was to blame; he had believed those cruel lies, he had allowed his mind to be poisoned against his friend by that atrocious scoundrel, Garston.

Gladys never knew of his folly; she merely thought that he had for a time been mad, and therefore said mad things; she never knew that his sufferings had, in a great measure, been on her account. He told Seton everything, and begged

his pardon for believing such things could have been. "It must have been my mind was unhinged by the shipwreck," he urged in mitigation. Seton freely forgave him, and owned that he had not been wholly blameless. He told Guss what had taken place between Emma and himself, he set the affair in such a light that Emma, instead of seeming to be a designing woman, appeared a most estimable girl, who had been hardly used by him.

Guss was by this time able to laugh, and he replied; "Seton, old fellow, if all were to be triced up who squeezed girls' fingers, or gave moonlight kisses, by gum, there would be a pretty large muster to overhaul every Black Monday: it would be a case of piping all hands pretty nearly."

Long before this conversation took place, Mrs. Tarleton had arrived. It really seemed as if all the world made a sort of public caravanserai of Mrs. Filters' house: Seton and Gladys, Mrs. Wren and her maid, now, Guss and Mrs. Tarleton. "I wonder who'll be coming and falling ill here next?" said poor Mrs. Filters, "and they ain't so civil as to be too welcome; first, there was Mrs.

Wren, who eat my chicken and drank my best sherry; then she rings for me, and"

"Don't be calling that up all over again, mother, I am sure she apologised most handsomely; it was along of that Mr. Garston and his lies, she did not know anything about us any other way."

"Then comes this young Tarleton, with language unfit for a fishman; whatever he meant by speaking of you as the 'girl I call my daughter,' I am sure I don't know; 'call my daughter,' indeed; if you ain't the child of me and Nehemiah"—here she looked lovingly at her deceased husband's portrait—"I don't know who is, that's all."

"He was quite strange you know, mother, he did not know what he was saying; Gladys says he said all sorts of queer things to them."

"Strange or not strange, I should think he knew better manners than to call me a woman."

"Never mind, mother, he gave it to us all round, but it did not break any bones."

Mrs. Filters sighed deeply; she really felt as if everything was conspiring against the peace of Remington Place; not that she disliked a little

excitement, but with Seton only just able to walk from room to room, Gladys accommodated in the second floor back, Guss, lying ill in the second floor front, and a strange man in the garret, it was rather too much to be now called on to receive Mrs. Tarleton. Already she had given up her room to Guss, and retired to the floor above; now, if Mrs. Tarleton was to be entertained, she must move again, she and Emma must sleep together in the third floor back.

"I don't like to be so 'igh up, in case of fire we should all be burnt, and at the back we couldn't even have the fire escapes."

"Lor,' mother, we shall do very well; how would you like it if I had been out and got shipwrecked, and come home and been ill, and you couldn't be accommodated near me for a night or two—he is her only son, you know."

"There is a good deal in that, Emma; why ever she lets her son go off shipwrecking about the world, I don't know; I often think the topmost people 'avent half the bowels we middle-class people have." In illustration of her own compassion, she made room for Mrs. Tarleton, who, on her arrival, Mrs. Filters found by no means a top-

most sort of person, but just a simple plain lady, very much like herself, and they got on capitally together.

As Guss progressed, the two mothers assisted each other in concocting the most wonderful soups and dainties for the sick man. Mrs. Tarleton informed Gladys that she had never known a lady who had such an excellent method in her kitchen, or who was so generally kind and obliging. Mrs. Filters told Emma, "that if there were many like Mrs. Tarleton in Avonshire she would not mind living in that county, at least in summer; not," she added in a whisper, "that I hold with her in putting roasted onion into chicken broth, it don't want colour, it makes it too tasty to my thinking."

There is no need to say how overjoyed Mrs. Tarleton was to find her boy again; shocked at his wasted appearance, yet she soon got accustomed to that, and, as she saw him mending day by day, she felt unbounded gratitude that he had been restored to her in so wonderful a way.

When Guss was able to leave his room he narrated to Emma and her mother his strange escape, and his adventures on the island. In all these narrations he suppressed particular

mention of Ayuhooa and Keeauwa. They were quite a happy family as they assembled round Mrs. Filters' hospitable board; she was there in her element; to see her ladling out the soup, dispensing the fish, cutting up the primest joints and the best poultry, was a real treat; she drew Mrs. Tarleton's attention to the particular flavourings, and she pressed them all to eat heartily.

Her hospitality was unbounded; she would not hear of Mrs. Tarleton's seeking a fresh lodging for herself and Guss; "when he is fit to go 'ome he can go, but with my consent, mam, he doesn't leave Remington Place till you take him down to Avonshire."

They all took breathless interest in Guss's stories, they never could hear enough of his adventures.

The only thing that puzzled Mrs. Filters was, "how a lady who was so plain and pleasant, who had such a nice taste for cookery, always excepting in the matter of roast onion in chicken broth, could have such a small allotment of bowel as to let her only son go up and down the world like an animal hunting for its food."

Emma did not approve of the way her mother

expressed Mrs. Tarleton's want of compassionate feeling; but her mother said, "if Bible words ain't good enough for you, Emma, they are for me, I am old-fashioned enough for that; good lies in the 'eart, and compassion in the bowels! why should I speak of the one and not of the other, I should like to know?"

CHAPTER V.

WINDING UP OF THE ESTATE.

Seton got better very slowly; long before he had attained anything like his former health and strength, Guss was quite well again, and he, his mother and Gladys had gone to the "Quarries;" Seton was to go down there as soon as the weather got a little warmer.

Mrs. Filters undertook to see that he was not imprudent, and she and Mrs. Tarleton held a long and anxious consultation as to what flannel and other under-garments the invalid was to wear; the former lady charged herself with the mission of carrying out their united decision, and insisting on the prescribed articles being strictly adhered to.

"I like him as if he was my own son, mam," Mrs. Filters said; "I had 'oped indeed but there I don't grudge him to your young lady, a sweeter girl I

never set eyes on. She and my Emma are quite opposites, and we all like our own chicks best, but lor' the men pick and choose, and the girls have to sit by and wait."

Mrs. Tarleton replied—

"I assure you, Mrs. Filters, I never saw a nicer, a handsomer, or a prettier-mannered girl, than Emma; whoever does get her will be a lucky man; I have had good opportunities for judging, and that is my genuine opinion."

The two ladies parted in a most friendly manner, and things fell back into their old grooves; Mrs. Filters descended to her own room, and Seton, as he sat solitary, amid the glories of the drawing-room, could hardly believe that so much had happened since he was driven from that paradise to the drabbiness of Winchcom Street. He now constantly sat with the Filters'; he took his meals with them, and only indulged in solitary state when he wished for repose, still needful to his weak condition. His conduct to Emma was condoned; all was forgiven if not forgotten; Emma's wound was pretty nearly healed—together they led a very quiet, cheerful life.

It is, however, impossible to be altogether free from care; in this instance, Hodges was the disturbing element. Now that Seton was well enough to attend to business, he was again harried and worried by this wretched affair of Hodges'. Much correspondence took place; James Hodges, the lawyer, came to town and had an interview with Mr. Gosling. The conclusion everyone arrived at was, that Seton was possibly legally liable, but there was no one to bring him to account; Hodges and Dora having not only consented to, but desired the arrangement that had caused the loss, indeed had pressed it on Seton. A time might come when the children, being grown up, could urge their claims, but for the present no action could well be taken.

This was so far satisfactory, but Seton felt that he had been negligent in performing the duties of his trust, that he was morally answerable to the children even before they grew up. Hodges and Dora in letters, now threatening, now imploring, that their babes should not be allowed to suffer, stated that the pittance which remained to them was insufficient to give their children such an education as would fit them to fight a

good fight in the great battle of life to which they must one day be summoned.

It seemed to Seton that it was very early times to be thinking of training these children to be soldiers of life, inasmuch as none of the babes were as yet old enough even to go to a day-school, but he saw that some day there would really be force in such arguments, so he determined to appropriate to their use such sum of money as a family council should deem right and just, even if it swallowed up his last penny.

If all things were duly paid up by the Holborn Estate, there would be six thousand pounds coming to him, and he had still about two thousand in the bank; so he could pay back the money Garston had stolen; how he was to live he did not as yet plan out, but he would do what was just as far as lay in his power.

A council was held; Wren came up to town on purpose to attend it; Sarncombe was there; and Mr. Gosling was invited to assist them with his legal advice. Hodges, accompanied by his brother James, attended without invitation: Dora had heard of the intended meeting, and she sug-

gested to her husband that he had better go up; so he and James arrived.

At first both Wren and Sarncombe objected to Hodges being present, and in any case they refused to let James have anything whatever to do with the affair; it was simply a family council, there was nothing of law in it; it was a mere matter of justice; they had chosen to ask Mr. Gosling to attend, but that was a matter for their own consideration. James Hodges had therefore to retire from Remington Place, but Hodges himself was permitted to remain.

Mr. Gosling explained as well as he was able what the legal position was—

"Not," he said, "my dear sirs, that I should venture to lay down the law on such a subject; it might be as well to prepare a short case for counsel, and in the meanwhile adjourn this meeting."

Sarncombe declared that if it was to be a law affair, he was out of it. Wren utterly declined to entertain the idea of any case, either short or long, being laid before counsel.

"No, no; no more law, thank you, Mr. Gosling," said Seton.

"Well, well, my dear sirs, it might save trouble hereafter; but I am only here to advise to the best of my poor abilities; and in self-defence I tell you you must not take my law on the subject, as a thing wholly to be depended on; we are all liable to error. I should prefer your letting me draw up a case for counsel, I really should now." And no doubt Mr. Gosling would have preferred it; he scented a fresh bill, long and very full of items, with Wren answerable for its payment. But it was not to be so; they would have no law in the matter; so after they had extracted all they could from Mr. Gosling upon the subject, they bowed him out.

He left with only his usual cheery manner visible, but inwardly he was much depressed; what a field was going to be left unmanured, and would therefore be unproductive to the law in general, and to his pocket in particular.

"Dear, dear; a very pretty case, a ve-ry pretty case indeed, and all wasted; dear, dear me."

If only he and James had had the management of the affair, what excellent results might have been achieved!

The council resumed, and Hodges urged all he could think of, all he had been primed with by his brother James and by Dora; he defended himself, and he blamed Seton. He finished by saying, "that if he was alone in the world, he would take it all on his own shoulders, bear his burden with gladness, and trust that such affliction would eventuate in making him a better man, wean his thoughts from things earthly, and prepare him for a better place; but as it was, he must plead for his wife and for his little ones." He ended by saying, "If I was to neglect that solemn trust which has been confided to me, I should be as a faithless steward; I must stand firm as a soldier at his post, and face all who seek to deprive my wife and children of that which should have been guarded for them as the ark of old was guarded; I may fall in the battle of life, I may not be spared to shelter and protect my dear ones; what would then be before them. If this money, which is their ark, is lost to them, where will my children shelter, where can they take refuge, if an hour comes when they are left alone to struggle with the cold world?"

Hodges was permitted to finish his address;

this he delivered after the fashion of those sermons with which he regaled the people of Slumpton-in-Squash.

When he had ended, Wren and Sarncombe suggested that he had better retire until they had consulted together as to what should be done. So he joined his brother James at a chop house—agreed upon by them as a trysting place.

Seton told his brothers-in-law that he wished to do all he could, irrespective of his legal rights.

"Hang law!" put in Sarncombe.

Wren agreed in this sentiment, though he worded it differently; and, after much consultation, they came to the conclusion that four thousand pounds should be invested, and the interest re-invested, until the full sum of eight thousand pounds was achieved; thus, when the eldest son became of age, the original amount would have been replaced, and paid into the hands of new trustees. Further, they agreed to furnish such portions of the sum of three hundred and twenty pounds, which represented the interest on the eight thousand, at four per cent., as should from time to time be judged advisable by Wren and Sarncombe, in the interest of the children when

they came to require such assistance for educational purposes. Seton was to pay the lump sum of four thousand pounds, and Wren and Sarncombe agreed to find the other moneys as they should be required. It was obvious that Seton could not pay more, so Wren and Sarncombe charged themselves with seeing to the rest. Wren was very well off, and Sarncombe had just inherited a very nice little property in Berkshire. If Seton became enriched, he was to take this responsibility off the hands of his brothers-in-law.

When Hodges returned, he was informed of the arrangement they proposed to make, provided he and Dora gave Seton a deed of indemnity. After going down, and consulting with his brother James, he agreed to these terms, and wound up the interview by stating that he was quite willing to forgive and forget all that had happened in the matter. He said he felt the hand of Providence was on him for his imprudence in confiding in Garston; and he called for fire to fall on the head of that defaulter; and he hoped, that men so worldly, and so hypocritical—that people so base as to traffic in the little store of her who might become a widow, and of those who might be

fatherless, would meet with the punishment their misdeeds merited. He became tearful over himself, as he described the possible widow and the problematical semi-orphan children. Really, it seemed to Wren, Sarncombe, and Seton as if he absolutely thought he had been the one most hardly used in the whole affair.

They were all very glad when, to use Sarncombe's expression, "he cut it," after imploring a blessing on all there assembled. They thought the tavern sherry must have been of a fiery nature.

This very disagreeable incident being now happily arranged, Seton thought the time had arrived to make another effort at settlement with Mr. Fermor. There was still a gross sum of fourteen thousand pounds due from the Holborn Estate; of this he would now get only two, as four had to go into trust for Hodges, and eight was due to Wren. The two thousand, together with what remained in the bank, might produce, at the outside, an income of some two hundred a year. This was all that remained of his heritage. Westerham was quite gone, and all its proceeds were dispersed. Had he not been fool enough to

embark on the law-suit, he would certainly have had another hundred a year; had it not been for Garston's rascality, there would have been an additional hundred and fifty, or more; altogether, he must have had from four to five hundred a year, which, with the interest of a few hundreds that Gladys had inherited, would have been sufficient, not only to keep poverty from coming in at the door, but also to purchase those moderate pleasures which would have sufficed for the happiness of those who possessed such simple tastes as he and Gladys.

How would it be now? Between them they would not be able to raise more than some two hundred and fifty or sixty pounds a year. And Seton knew by experience that such a sum would not allow them to commence housekeeping with anything like prudence. He could not help wishing that his uncle would do something for them. He argued that the colonel had much more than he could possibly spend—how much more, he did not know; but he did know that he must have over a hundred thousand pounds, and he also knew that he could not possibly spend more than two thousand a year, do what he would in

Wellingtonia Lodge; he never left home, and he only kept one horse—old Waterloo.

It is not as if he had any one else to leave it to, thought Seton; he has not a relation in the world, except us; of course, he will provide handsomely for Eliza—I beg her pardon, Mrs. Warrington; and he may leave Elinor, Harriet, and Dora a full share, but even then, at the lowest, I must get over twenty thousand pounds.

Then he went off into a reverie concerning the way he and Gladys would live on an income derived from that sum; they would have a fixed residence, which should be in England, because it is not well to expatriate oneself; France, Italy, Germany are all very well to visit, but to live in, England is the place, in spite of its climate. "Then, where to pitch one's permanent camp—Avonshire is delightful, but I should always be regretting Westerham, if I lived in its neighbourhood; no, we will go and live in one of those southern counties, where the winter comes with abated breath—where the lanes are lovely wtih tall ferns, the hills glow with gorse and heather, and the sea is so accessible; or would it not be better to live near London, in reach of

the heart of the nation—of the centre of modern life; if living close to town, we could, without much trouble or expense, see all that goes on there—the exhibitions, and the theatres, the operas, the concerts, and the whole moving life of the great city." Here Seton thought of the shops, and remembered how delighted Gladys had been with the shop windows, when, on one occasion, he had taken her arm, rather than she his, and they had walked down Regent Street together. The parks of London, too, he thought, are better than anything you can have the entry of in the country, "unless you have a place of your own, such as this income will not afford us." Here he sighed for Westerham, and remembered that he was only building *chateaux* that had no foundation; this life would be very pleasant, but . . "Still," he thought, "there is no harm in planning what one would do, and my uncle must leave his money among us. Of course he will leave Eliza an annuity, and something to the servants, but besides that trifle, it must come to my sisters and myself."

This point established, Seton wandered on again. In thought, he and Gladys visited many

countries together; saw strange, new sights, looked on the great plains of waving corn—on the snow-mountains, and on the forests; together they wandered into old churches, and great galleries, where works of the kings of art were hung; together they gazed on the statues and the palaces, the arenas, and the temples of the giant races passed away; together they sat under the great canopy of the dark skies of the south, watching the moon-light ripple on the waters; together

Here, a tap came to the door, and his senses reverting to Remington Place, he said—

"Come in."

The maid entered, and handed him a letter, which was from Mr. Fermor, and was couched in friendly terms enough. It informed Seton that the affairs of the Holborn Estate were now in such a condition that if he wished it, the fourteen thousand pounds could be paid to him in six months from that date; indeed, if he particularly desired it, he could have the money much sooner, as a purchaser could be found who would at once take over his securities. The letter concluded with an expression of regret that Seton

had been so ill-advised as to plunge into legal proceedings against one whose only wish had been to protect the interests of the son of an old friend.

This was very welcome news, indeed; at last, land was in sight—at length the inheritance affairs could be wound up. Seton at once wrote to Mr. Fermor, thanking him for his communication, and accepting the offer of immediate purchase of his interest in the Holborn Estate. He did not think it necessary to refer to the sentence about the law suit, as he by no means believed that Mr. Fermor was the immaculate individual he made himself out to be, both by letter and by word of counsel; he did not believe in him, and he rejoiced at the idea of being for ever quit of him.

The winding up at once, was, however, a form of speech, if "at once" is taken to mean in two or three weeks. Still the matter progressed, legally speaking, very quickly, considering the intricacy of the affairs of the Holborn Estate—a property which required very delicate handling. In the end, Wren received his eight thousand pounds, and Seton, after paying over four thousand to

trustees for Hodges' children, also settling a final bill sent in by Mr. Gosling, was, at last, quit of the whole affair.

In honour of this event, our hero thought a banquet would be appropriate; he knew Mrs. Filters liked a little junketing, and he wished to do any little thing he could to give that good lady pleasure, she had been so kind to him.

Guss was up in town, and Seton thought that he and the Blessets, with Mrs. Filters, Emma, and himself, would make up a very pleasant little party.

The guests were accordingly invited, and all accepted with alacrity the invitation to spend a happy day at Greenwich.

CHAPTER VI.

A FISH DINNER.

Before indulging in our dinner we must just recall the fact that Lieutenant Tarleton had been wrecked in Her Majesty's ship "Irresolute;" he was the only officer who escaped from that wreck and therefore as a matter of course he must be tried by court martial for the loss of that ship. It appeared that he had not been in any way to blame for the wreck, he was not even on duty at the time the vessel struck, so he was honourably acquitted, and his sword was returned to him.

He received an intimation that old Grampus, whose real name, it may be remembered, was Sir Leonard Harrington, would get him appointed to a fresh ship, and as soon as he had served his time see to his promotion. Sir Leonard had in fact said, "we must see if we can't drown him in a fresh ship, if not we must give him a vessel in which he may drown himself, die of sunstroke at

Fernando Po, or some such infernal hole, or get fever up some of those d—d muddy creeks, poking about after slavers who we allow to run free at Zanzibar." Never before had old Grampus been known to speak so pleasantly of a young officer, and Guss's friend and informant concerning these matters advised him to get afloat at once. He added, "Grampus is so sweet on you, that I really do believe if he only lives he will push you up to the top of the tree, mast-head you old fellow, with plenty of gold lace, and heavy swabs to keep you steady; you see a clerk to Her Majesty's Board of Admiralty is bound to be well up in nautical terms."

Guss was wilful, and would not sail in on the full flood of fortune; mentally he said old Grampus might go hang; but he wrote and thanked his friend for his letter, and said all that was proper concerning the great man. But he did not apply for a ship; he said he was rather shaken with it all, and wanted a little rest.

In truth he was getting tired of a sea life. It is a very pleasant thing to read about, but in practice a cabin six feet by five is very uncomfortable; you certainly go about the world at the

expense of your country, but in general you get sent to those parts of it you care least to see; and then there is a deal of bother with captains, and there are tiresome duties to be performed. "It is a very fine service in war time," Guss argued, "but in these days of peace there is little to be achieved. Suppose old Grampus does stick to me, what then? I shall get on to be a commander, and perhaps get a ship on some out of the way station."

Guss did not, even to himself, urge the real motive for pitching up the service which lay at the bottom of all these other arguments; there is, however, no reason for reticence on the subject.

She was a very nice girl indeed, very handsome, and well educated; what if her mother did slip her haytshes occasionally, or once in a way put one in unnecessarily? he did not propose marrying the mother; not but what she was an uncommonly fine woman, and wonderfully young looking for her age. "Some fellow has said, 'before you marry a girl trot out the mother,' and by gum, Emma's mother would hold her own with any of them; if she wears as well as her

mother, she won't be a woman to be ashamed of in the fifties?" All this thought Guss; and Emma lay at the bottom of his repugnance to accepting the kindness of old Grampus.

All that he had seen of Emma had been most pleasant to him, but he did wish Garston's lies had never been uttered, and that the Richmond kissing had never taken place. He had spoken lightly to Seton of a kiss and a squeeze, and all that sort of thing, but when it is the girl you want who has been kissed and squeezed the whole thing assumes a different aspect.

Confound it all, was Seton always going to get in his way? first he had cut him out in the matter of Gladys; he could not have her because Seton had forestalled him. Now probably he could have Emma, at least he thought she had encouraged him a little, but Seton had sipped first from her ruby lips. "Dash him, he is always getting in my way," thought Guss.

This however was unfair, for at present Seton was not in his way at all, and had it not been for him he would never have heard or known of one who had driven Gladys back in his affections. Now, he did not want Gladys, and he did *want* Emma.

It will be noticed that his feelings were much changed since the day when he drove to Remington Place to rescue Gladys from the pollution of that sink of iniquity; since the day he called Mrs. Filters woman, and, pointing his finger at Emma, had warned her to repent.

When it is said he did want Emma, it must be understood that he did not quite put it so plainly to himself. He liked her very much, he admired her immensely; before her splendid beauty all recollection of Marraquitas, such as he had encountered in foreign parts, died away; even the less glowing charms of Gladys paled as the sweet spring time does before the fervid heat of summer; but there were the two things to be got over—the want of birth, and the Richmond affair.

As to the birth, he did not really lay much stress on that; "a man raises a woman to his own rank," thought Lieutenant Tarleton; and that pretty well got rid of the gentility matter, for he considered Emma to be in point of manners quite equal to any lady he had ever seen, as in point of beauty she was very superior.

"If I do go in for her"—this was the stage at which he had arrived—"if I do go in for her I will

pitch the service to the deuce; we shall have plenty of money, and I would buy a yacht and go to sea my own master, instead of being ordered about by some beast I hate."

The idea of yachting with Emma was very pleasant; how very stunning she would look in a sailor's hat and a pea-jacket; what a very jolly time they would have. Seen through the halo of these surroundings, Guss's "if I do go in for her" became more like "by gum, I will go in for her; what the deuce, am I to be choked off this splendid girl because Seton gave her a kiss? I wonder where the girl is who has not been kissed if anyway kissable. Here is a real clipper, a girl in twenty millions, shall I not get her if I can, simply because old Seton gave her a kiss one evening? If I can?—ah, there is the rub after all, I am by no means sure that she cares a straw about me; and she will have a good bit of money, most likely there are fellows after her, in fact of course there must be—a girl like her!"

These reflections made Guss feel that he ought to sound her if he intended anything; so he jumped at Seton's Greenwich party. "I will just throw out a line, and fathom the depths," thought

he, "I will be very cautious not to commit myself, but the day shan't end without my finding out how the land lies."

* * * * * *

There was a fellow after her; no less a fellow than her cousin Jack, who, finding there was nothing between her and Seton—that it had all blown over, even if it had ever existed—had permitted himself to be enslaved by her charms and her prospects. Mrs. Filters was very partial to him—he was so uncommonly cheery—and if Seton was not to be had, Emma might do much worse, she thought, than take to Jack. She had no ideas concerning Guss; he had not been in any way demonstrative, whereas Jack had been very much so.

Seton was determined to charge himself with the whole outlay of the Greenwich party, so he had ordered two carriages for the occasion; the programme was, to start early, drive to Eltham, and there have a bit of luncheon, look about there, drive on to Blackheath, enter Greenwich Park, explore its recesses, admire its splendid chestnuts, look through the telescope on One Tree Hill, chat with the old pensioners, and so gain an appetite

for the fish dinner ordered at the Trafalgar. After that the day would probably take care of itself.

Mr. Blesset opined that it was a most excellent programme. Jack esteemed it an uncommonly good lark. Mrs. Blesset feared it would be wet.

The morning turned out to be all that could be desired, and Mrs. Blesset would have for once been quite happy with no rose leaf to crumple and spoil her pleasure—had she not mislaid her best boots! It was no use: they hunted high and low, but these boots were not forthcoming.

"We can't wait any longer," said Mr. Blesset; and when he spoke in his own house his words were law, and to be instantly obeyed. So his unfortunate wife had to set off in her old boots, unconsoled by Jack's remark that "no one would be any the wiser if she kept her feet in;" her pleasure was gone, for she perpetually thought that every eye was on her feet.

The arranging into carriages was easy enough, as far as Emma and the elders went; Seton handed Mrs. Filters to the place of honour in his carriage; Guss was to be in command of

the second vehicle; next, Mr. Blesset was seated by Mrs. Filters, and Mrs. Blesset and Emma were given the back seat in carriage number two.

Where was Jack to go? was the question; Seton tried to hand him into his vehicle, and Guss, much favouring that plan, got into his, and was about to secure the door, when Jack who was far too acute to allow himself to be separated from Emma, with a cheerful laugh jumped into the seat opposite his cousin, winked at her, and said, "I must take care of my mother." Thus Guss was, by force of circumstances, compelled to seat himself opposite to Mrs. Blesset.

It is a very pleasant drive to Eltham, and the day was fine, so all should have been in their best spirits. Seton was so, because his inheritance troubles were ended; Mrs. Filters was naturally cheerful, and Mr. Blesset was looking forward to the fish dinner. But in the second carriage things did not go so well: Guss thought Jack a snob, which he wasn't; he was an entirely natural merry-hearted fellow, very good tempered, and by no means a fool; only his manners were

not those of Guss, who could be as rollicking and rattling as Jack himself, only in a different sort of way—he hated personalities and practical jokes such as Jack delighted in.

Just now Guss was in a bad humour because Jack had entered the carriage; the drive would have been so much pleasanter if Jack had gone in the leading vehicle, and he had been left alone with Emma and Mrs. Blesset. The latter lady was not one he cared to face all through a long drive.

Emma was looking to very great advantage; she was still just a little pale with much nursing, and had hardly regained that full robustness which had in some measure failed her during those days when she pined for and nursed Seton; but these things rather improved, than lessened, her attractions; she was dark, and of an olive complexion, so did not need roses as women with fair skins do. Although of this olive tint, her complexion was very clear, and her neck was like that of the tinted Venus; she had chosen a bonnet, new for the occasion, which suited her admirably, and set off Nature's colours; she was in excellent spirits, thought London Bridge delightful, and the shipping charming.

Jack entirely engrossed her; he pointed out all the objects of interest; gave names, dates, and histories; he had a good memory, and a better invention; even about the ships he asserted a superior knowledge to that of Guss.

Then he was not bashful; as they got into the straggling streets that, in contra-distinction to the more crowded ones, may almost be called country, he said, "now, Emma, let us make ourselves comfortable; put out your feet, and let me stretch my legs."

Then a fitting of feet took place between those two, to Guss's intense disrelish. Mrs. Blesset longed to stretch her feet out, but she was afraid of her boots being seen, so she kept on fidgetting her knees, which Jack perceiving, he said, "Oh, mother, Mr. Tarleton won't mind I'm sure, will you?"

"Will I mind what?" said Guss.

"Well, it is a secret, but the fact is my mother has a habit of putting away things so carefully, that she can't find them again, and this morning she couldn't find her"

"Have done, do Jack; what can you be thinking of?"

"Oh, what is the good of keeping it dark, it is only her boots she couldn't find."

Mrs. Blesset blushed, and Guss involuntarily looked down to see what she had on.

Emma said, "don't teaze your mother, Jack; I'm sure her boots are good enough."

"Show them, mother, and Mr. Tarleton shall decide whether they are the thing, or not."

Thus urged, poor Mrs. Blesset pushed out one foot, then the other, for Guss's decision. They certainly were not the thing at all, they were much worn and bulgy, with elastics flabby and rubbed, but, of course, Guss said all manner of good things respecting them, and wandered off into praises of old boots in general, wondering how any one could put on new ones if they could help it.

This was satisfactory to Mrs. Blesset; but Guss felt he had not come on this expedition to discuss old boots. It ended in his interlacing his feet with those of Mrs. Blesset, and he grew morose.

Emma was not above being amused by Jack's bad jokes; she was in high spirits, and enjoying herself immensely.

Jack felt very jolly, he thought his star was in the ascendant; he made excuses to touch his cousin's hand, and he nudged her when he said what he esteemed good things. He looked into her eyes, and asked her riddles invented for the occasion, such as "why ought the drive we are taking to be good for sick horses?"

"Give it up? do you give it up, Mr. Tarleton, too?"

"Give up what," said Guss, grumpily.

Then the question was repeated, and Guss testily replied—

"Oh, I give it up, Mr. Blesset."

"Well, then, I will tell you. Because we are driving to Eltham."

"I don't see, I must confess, but I daresay it is very good."

"If you were a cockney, like me and Emma, you would twig directly; Eltham, Health 'em." He emphasized the point by giving Guss a little dig with his forefinger; "not bad, eh?"

Emma laughed, Mrs. Blesset looked pleased at her boy's wit, and Guss groaned inwardly.

Later on, Jack tried to trot Guss out about the shipwreck; he thought to himself, "bother

it all, he can talk about something, I suppose." This endeavour met with very scant success; Guss was sick of the shipwreck, and by no means wished to be trotted out by Jack, so he snubbed that topic, and when Jack proffered a riddle, in keeping with the subject, to the effect of, "Where is the natural home of the sirens?" Answer, "On the *coral* (*choral*) rocks to be sure," he could hardly refrain from being overtly disagreeable to that young man, the more so as Emma thought the joke was a very good one, and tapped Jack playfully with her parasol in appreciation of it.

Not in the least comprehending that Guss was furious, Jack went on—

"Did you meet any sirens there, Mr. Tarleton? I bet you what you like that none of the whole lot equalled some one I won't name, but who I can see."

"Be quiet, Jack, and don't talk rubbish," said Emma; and this time the tap Jack got on his knuckles from the parasol was more than playful, for Emma now perceived that Guss was seriously annoyed, and hardly able to restrain himself. She dropped Jack, and engaged Mrs.

Blesset in conversation till they approached Eltham.

It was an infinite relief to Guss when the carriage stopped, and they all got out. While lunch was preparing, the whole party went to see a portion of the ancient Palace of the Black Prince, now a barn. Here Jack was entirely in his element; he acted as guide, not that he had ever been there before, or knew anything about it, but none the less did he give a full, true and particular account of what he termed the rise and fall of the Black Prince, who, according to his version of history, was so named because all the French nobility went into mourning for relatives killed by the English under his command. Coming to his untimely death, Jack said "his valour raised him to a great height, for which reason this hall was made very lofty, as you can see for yourselves; falling so far, he necessarily hurt himself severely, and it was all because he would go sliding on French ice, near Bordeaux; the fact is, at that place they hated him for killing their relatives, and so they bored a hole in the Eau, near Bordeaux, which consummated his ruin, and was the cause of great

grief to his step-father, Henry III., who never smiled afterwards, until one day an ancestor of mine told him that if he had only gone in for writing 'Self Help,' he might have been 'Smiles' all over; this remark restored his gaiety, and though the Palace which we now survey is in ruins, I can assure you that the 'Gaiety' is still in its full flush and prime, as in the old days when my ancestor was esteemed to be the worthy progenitor of his charming descendant."

"Now, Emma, Mrs. Filters, and all the company, walk up those steps, and in so doing, look to your feet; I don't mean anything personal, mother." So this young man chattered on, clack, clack, clack, ... like a boy bird-keeping, who knocks a bit of board with a stick just so went his jaws unceasingly.

"What in the world did you ask that young fool for?" inquired Guss of Seton; "he is enough to swamp a long boat; I wish I had him in blue water, by gum, I would teach him."

The next thing was lunch. After that they drove round by Shooter's Hill, and so on to Blackheath. When they reached the corner of

the park wall, they all got out and the carriages were sent on to Greenwich.

Then things mended with Guss. Seton made a strong diversion in his favour by offering Jack a bet of five shillings that he would beat him at a level standing jump. During the discussion raised by this offer, Guss got a word with Emma who declared that she did not take much interest in jumping, but would prefer walking in the shade of the great avenues, which branched away in all directions; so these two wandered off together.

"Your cousin seems to have an immense stock of cheerfulness," began Guss.

"Yes, isn't he a merry fellow?"

"Oh, merry enough, but not over wise, I should think."

"He is considered very clever."

"Is he? oh, in making jokes, I suppose. Some people do like that sort of thing but don't you think it gets a little wearisome?"

"I like jokes; but what I mean is that he is considered very clever in the business."

"What is he?"

"He is a clerk in the same house as his father, who manages for Jones and Jones, the great brokers."

"Oh."

Then they walked on side by side for some time without speaking. Emma stole a glance at her companion from time to time, and observing that he was still moody, she opened out fresh topics, and chatted of such things as the old pensioners, the river and the ships.

After a time Guss regained his temper; it was a lovely day, the river was shining as if it was a stream of silver; the trees were rustling as if full of their own happiness, the birds were singing as in thankfulness for theirs; the air was fresh and sweet, and Emma was in keeping with her surroundings. As she talked on, her voice seemed ever to grow softer.

They spoke of the things around them, and each was thinking of the other. Both had been in love before, but both believed such love had been an error, and that this was the reality—that had been a mistake born of circumstances, this was quite different, and a superior sort of love; thus they imagined as they walked on together.

Then they sat down upon a bench, and Emma, to keep the ball of conversation rolling, said—

"What a deal you have seen in all those foreign places; I suppose if you did not see sirens on your island, you have seen all sorts of beautiful ladies at the places you visited?"

"Yes, all sorts," and he thought of Ayuhooa and Keeauwa.

"Tell me about them, which was the most beautiful? I have heard you speak of Marraquita Rosas; I suppose she was dark?"

"Yes, Marraquita was dark, and considered very handsome."

"Then, I suppose there were some light ones too; you sailors are so fickle, they say?"

Guss did not answer for a minute, the mention of light beauties had set him thinking of Gladys.

Emma saw that he was disinclined to answer, and, by way of changing the subject, ran on with—

"What a lovely girl your cousin, Miss Clifford, is."

Guss, who had been leaning forward, looked up, and said—

"I should like to tell you something, if I may?" Emma thought, "Now it is coming."

But it wasn't, for when she replied—

"Oh, yes, I will listen to anything you like to tell me, but we must not be long, or they will be wondering what has become of us;"

Guss went on—

"I shan't be long; you spoke of Gladys Clifford, and said she was very lovely, so perhaps you won't be astonished if I tell you that I have thought so, and once went so far as to propose to her."

"And she?"

"She refused me, because she was engaged to Seton, a thing of which I of course was ignorant. I have quite got over that refusal, though I own it took me some time to do so."

Emma sat silent for a while, then as he did not say more, she got up and looked at her watch.

Guss said—

"You are not angry, because I told you this?"

"No why should I be?"

"Only because why, Miss Filters Emma you must know surely you

. must have understood that I think you more lovely than all the Marraquitas in the world, or all the others; surely you must have guessed that I hope and trust that you are the best and loveliest girl I ever saw the sweetest" Here the words ended; he had taken her hand when he commenced uttering these broken sentences; as he proceeded, he had drawn her down to the seat again; when he concluded, he had got his arm round her, and when the words ceased, there began a sound of kissing that was in strict harmony with the singing of the birds, the rustling of the trees, the gleaming of the waters, and the sweetness of the air.

After a time, these first offerings on the shrine of love ceased, and they sat still. Then Emma's turn came to make her confession about Seton. Guss, who knew the whole story, listened to but little of the version of it, but stopped her mouth as lovers love to stop such mouths.

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Mr. and Mrs. Blesset and Mrs. Filters had meanwhile been acting as umpires in the jump-

ing match to which Seton had challenged Jack, and they were unanimous in awarding the prize to Jack, who not only jumped further in the standing jump, but also beat Seton easily in a running leap that our hero also wished to contest; Seton was altogether out of form, neither had he any wish to win, which may also have had something to do with it.

Mrs. Filters was consolatory, and defended Seton's prowess.

"It ain't to be expected after such illnesses lor', Jack never had a day's illness in his life."

Mrs. Blesset felt complimented by this statement, and returned thanks for her son's good constitution.

Seton handed over the five shillings, which sum of money should by rights have come from the pocket of Guss.

Mr. Blesset thought it was high time to be moving, as there was much to be seen before dinner.

"Halloa," said Jack, "where have Emma and Mr. Tarleton got to?"

They all started off in search of the truants, Seton carelessly remarking—

"They are sure to be looking at the view from One Tree Hill." This he said, because he had noticed that they went towards the Observatory.

The view from One Tree Hill is very fine indeed, and they came across a most delightful old pensioner who narrated such wonderful adventures, cutting out expeditions and strange doings on the seas and shores, that the time slipped fast away; he continued with yarns of Trafalgar that made some of his listeners thrill, caused Seton to yawn, Jack to commence chaffing, and Mr. Blesset to think of his dinner at the hostel named after the great victory. As each ship went down Seton yawned, and when the whole fleet was burnt, captured or sunk, he gladly tipped the old warrior, and seconded Mrs. Filters' suggestion to hunt up Emma.

"Wherever can she have got to?" said that lady, little thinking that she might be spoiling her daughter's chance by finding her too quickly; the fact was, she did not imagine there was anything in that quarter, she thought, if any one, Jack was the man. So she said, "do let us 'unt them up."

Fortunately the whole affair was settled before

they found the truants calmly sitting in the shade. Jack saluted them with—

"I say, Emma, I call it rather a shady sort of thing to be sitting there, while we have been running everywhere in search of you; your mother is miserable without you, and I have been so unhappy."

"You look so; who jumped furthest?"

"Well, I don't wish to brag, and Mr. Herold wasn't at his best; but before you is now standing the champion athlete of Greenwich Park, and as Greenwich is the very pivot and centre of the whole world, so I am the very pink of all creation for a running or a standing jump. Don't bow down to me, Mr. Tarleton, don't crown me with laurels, Emma, for I am a modest young man, and can't stand public adulation, any little testimonial in private, you know, Emma . . . And now, look here, do you see those two half-crowns? I have gained all that while you two have been idling in the shade wasting your valuable time."

Guss did laugh at this joke of Jack's; he began to think that really this young Blesset was good fun.

Jack went on—"Now here are these two half-crowns, and I am in a generous mood; what will you have, Emma? I will lay out all this five bob on you; just say what you will have—jewellery, or a dress, or what, only say." He would have gone on for half an hour, but his father insisted that there was now only comfortable time to see the chapel and the painted hall; so the whole party went on into the town, saw the sights, and then betook themselves to the Trafalgar.

The head waiter, in person, showed them up the stairs to their sitting room. This was a trial to Mrs. Blesset, for the stairs are steep, and there were assistant waiters standing in the passage, who, she made sure, would note her deficient boots; she bent herself at the knees, did all she could to hide her feet, but felt that, like Achilles, her heels at least were vulnerable; still the ordeal was ended; she had gained the top step, and was pluming herself thereon, when the head waiter looking, as she imagined, severely at her, said in a loud and reproachful tone . . . "Boots!"

She was paralyzed; she thought for a moment that the august waiter was scandalized at her foot coverings; she afterwards confessed to Emma and

Mrs. Filters that she could have sunk into the ground when she heard the awful word. But it turned out the waiter was only summoning the official who answers to that appellation to instruct him to show the gentlemen to the lavatory.

A fish dinner need not be described; it is easy to imagine; the amusement with which Emma saw dish after dish of fish come and go, the discussion as to the nature of each dish, the steady way in which Mr. Blesset worked through the procession of edibles, and the jokes of Jack.

After they had eaten of the fish, cutlets, ducks, and quail, that seem to form the items of a fish dinner; when the sweet things, cheese and salad, had been replaced by the dessert, Mr. Blesset solemnly declared that he believed there was nothing so wholesome as fish, that it improved the brain power, and other little matters taken with it helped to aid digestion, giving to the human stomach that variety of salts and aliment which essentially conduced to the general health.

A little later, the same gentleman, still harping on the wholesomes, suggested to Seton that a cigar in the open air was the proper

sanitary arrangement after dinner; so, he, Seton and Jack went off to perfect their systems with tobacco smoke.

Guss preferred remaining where he was; he and Emma sat in the window watching the vessels drifting down the tide, and the light die out upon the Essex coast. It grew darker, and Guss's arm stole round Emma's waist; he looked into her eyes, which were shining with a light that henceforth would be his beacon. These two wanted no words; his left arm was round her, and his right hand held hers.

It got quite dark, and Mrs. Filters, waking from the slumber that had come to her as a crown to her day's exertions and her dinner efforts, could not for a moment think where she was; the room was all in shade, but just opposite her arm chair was the window, now a space of pure grey light; the outline of the window was broken by what was apparently a mass made up of two heads and shoulders mixed, as it were, together, the one was male, the other was a female head. Then, as Mrs. Filters recalled where she was, and her sight grew clearer, she began to comprehend that the female head must

be that of Emma; no one was likely to be cuddling Mrs. Blesset, besides which, she heard the gentle snoring of that lady close at hand. Yes, it certainly was Emma, but was the other Jack?—he had gone off to smoke, but he might have returned—or could it be young Tarleton? For some moments she turned the matter over, then, the evening air compelled her to sneeze, and, as if by magic, the heads separated and the shoulders became disentangled. Shortly after, lights were brought, and Guss and Emma presented so cool an appearance that Mrs. Filters rubbed her eyes, and wondered whether she had dreamt of those heads and shoulders, or whether they had been a reality.

The smokers came in, and tea was served. During this meal Mrs. Blesset disturbed the equanimity of the lovers by blurting out—"I know all about it, I have found it out, what do you think of that?" and she looked triumphantly round the table. But it was only her best boots she was alluding to; she had suddenly recollected where she had hidden them! The incident, however, pretty well assured Mrs. Filters that the silhouette had been no delusion, for she noted

the sudden flush that came into the faces of the lovers.

"Dream or no dream," thought Mrs. Filters, "they shall have their chance;" so she fought for them in the matter of seats on the drive home. "Go off by yourselves, you gentlemen that smoke; me, and Mrs. Blesset and Emma, will go with Mr. Tarleton; pah, you all smell dreadful."

Jack made one remonstrance which was unheeded, and he had to go with Seton and his father; Guss remained master of the field.

He and Emma sat side by side; this time the hand-clasping was the grasping of a rock instead of the slippery pebble on which she had formerly depended.

Emma was not more fickle than others; because she cried for the moon and could not get it, there was no reason why planets should shine in vain, or stars cease to be attractive; Guss was a very bright star indeed in her firmament; a naval officer, the hero of the wreck of the "Irresolute," a gentleman of means, a fine, handsome, open-hearted fellow. Emma was not one made to pine away in solitude, to sigh her heart out because she met with one rebuff; besides this, after

some mysterious fashion the wound had healed, and her heart was whole again, sound and warm-beating, ready to pulsate at fresh shafts of "the god of love." All are not life-steadfast to the first idea, sometimes second loves, as second thoughts, may be the best; certainly Guss was a fine, brave young fellow.

On arriving at Remington Place there was a little confusion as the carriages set down; during this Emma found opportunity to whisper in the ear of Guss—"You once told me to go and repent, do you say that now?"

"What do you mean?"

"You said that to me when you were so ill, just before you fainted in our house, you know; shall I take you at your word?"

"Then I was mad, my love; now, I am madly in love." And they managed to exchange a kiss unseen.

Mr. Blesset said "it was too late to go in, that a little pleasure was very proper, but bed was a good place, and he should go there." So he and his wife and Jack set off for home, Guss going with them, as his road lay for a while in the same direction.

"Very pleasant party, I'm sure," was Mr. Blesset's summarization of the day's proceedings.

"Very pleasant, indeed," admitted Guss.

"To think of my best boots being in the top long drawer all the while!" sighed Mrs. Blesset.

"No end of a jolly feed," was Jack's verdict.

"I say, isn't Emma a stunner, Mr. Tarleton?"

The young man's heart was open; he had dined well, and taken much extra wine, so he spoke freely of his cousin's charms, and went on to tell Guss in confidence, "that it was all but a settled thing between him and her; as soon as he got a lift in the office he intended going in for her."

This was amusing; but Guss did not care to prolong the conversation on such a topic, so he soon turned off, after wishing the Blessets a very cordial good night.

Directly Mrs. Filters got Emma alone, she burst out—

"'Ow is it Hemma, is it to be?"

"Is what?"

"Why, you sly thing, you and Mr. Tarleton—is it to be?"

"To be what?"

"Why, is he to be your 'usband?"

"How did you guess it, mother?"

"Oh, leave me alone, I saw pretty plain what was going on between you."

"Then there is nothing for me to tell you."

"Don't tease, I am that tired; has he spoken plain?"

"Oh, yes, very plain," laughed Emma.

"And you have taken him?"

"Yes, mother!"

Then followed a long embrace, and a great deal of conversation took place, in spite of the weariness of Mrs. Filters. At last they separated. Mrs. Filters thought it was an excellent affair, but she could not help wishing it had been Jack. "He is well enough," she thought, "a fine young fellow, and a handsome—but lor,' there, Jack has a better temper. I only hope they will be happy; Jack is the one for my money; though he isn't so grand, certainly."

CHAPTER VII.

TOO LATE FOR THE FAIR.

NEXT morning Guss was an early visitor in Remington Place, and on this occasion it was not Seton, but Mrs. Filters he wished to see; so he was shown into the parlour, over which Nehemiah presided, in portrait.

His future mother-in-law was there ready to receive him; she was seated in state, thinking how on that other morning she had waited for Seton, and waited in vain. Although Guss was at the house quite as soon as could reasonably be expected, she had waited long enough to feel a sort of dread coming over her that he might be like that other one who never came at all; so she was very glad when the ring and knock announced his arrival, and she heard his voice in the passage.

She saved him much trouble in explaining how things were; she met him more than half

way, and generally conducted herself so as to make it a very agreeable interview.

Guss told her that "his fortune rendered him quite independent of his profession, and that he did not wish to serve actively any longer; he said that his mother had all along been averse to his going into the Navy, but nothing short of actual experience would satisfy him that such service was not so charming as represented in sea novels. Now, as he was about to become a family man, he would very gladly settle down, and perhaps they might just yacht a little occasionally, if they found Emma liked the sea."

Mrs. Filters told him that Emma would not come to him empty-handed, as she would on the day of her marriage receive four thousand pounds, "and when I am taken," she ended, "she will have the rest, which is something comfortable, though I say it, Mr. Tarleton. Now you have had your say with the old lady, I daresay you would like to have something to say with the young one?"

"As to old, Mrs. Filters, you look more like a sister of Emma's than her mother. I only hope she will be as fine a woman as

her mother, when she comes to be your age."

"Go along, with you do, trying to hoax your mother-in-law that is to be."

But Guss stuck to his colours, and stoutly averred that he meant what he had said, also insisted on kissing her; so that Mrs. Filters was delighted with the interview, no longer regretted Jack, and for ever more forgave Guss that his skin had not the whiteness of Seton's. As she went upstairs to send Emma to her lover, she said to herself—

"To think of him, who came ramping into this house, calling us all names, and behaving so dreadful, turning out to be 'usband and son to us; lor', there is a providence."

Emma was looking very fresh and nice in her morning dress, with the light of happiness in her eyes. Her dark hair braided in heavy masses about her head, gave her a very queenly air, and as she came towards him, Guss's heart beat quickly; he felt he had indeed won a very brilliant jewel, fit to be placed in any setting.

"Good morning, Emma."

"Good morning Augustus."

Then came

After those salutations were over, he said—

"You must please not call me Augustus, but Guss. I really hardly know myself as Augustus; no one ever called me by my full name. I am Guss with a sort of buzz at the end; why, I don't know, I believe it was because I used to imitate the bees who swarm in our great lime tree."

"As it is your first command, I will obey, Guss."

Then there was a little more buzz at that end called mouth. Indeed the conversation was so repeatedly mixed up with what perhaps we may be permitted to call buzzing, that it would be tedious to follow it, although its embranchments into buzzings and claspings were doubtless more than pleasant to those who were immediately concerned.

It is only necessary to say that business and pleasure were so far combined, that the day was named, a very early day; also an afternoon engagement was entered into, and then, Mrs. Filters having returned, it was settled that the afternoon walk should be succeeded by dinner in

Remington Place. Then Guss went upstairs to see Seton, and tell him of what had been arranged. Seton, however, was out, having gone to keep an engagement.

In the great house of Jones and Jones, Mr. John Blesset was regarded as a very rising young man; he was very attentive to his duties, possessed a clear head, and was backed by his father's influence, which in that establishment was considerable. It was therefore quite natural that he should look forward to speedy preferment to, if not a higher stool, a larger salary than he now enjoyed. It was also very natural that he should wish to marry his cousin, endowed as she was with beauty and with gold. Quite aware of these endowments, and incited by his father to keep the wealth of Mrs. Filters in the family if possible, Jack, on awaking from sleep which had been a little heavier than usual, resolved all these things in his mind. He had a very pleasant recollection of the Greenwich party, but something came to his memory that made him think it would be best to speak up at once, before Emma saw too much of that grumpy Lieutenant Tarleton. Emma had listened approvingly to

his jokes, smiled on him, and taken his part against the lieutenant in several little things on the way down to Eltham; she had not resented his familiarities, and she had allowed him to take certain cousinly liberties, so he had every hope; still it would be better not to delay, he thought; girls were romantic, and all that sea stuff might turn her head; "he certainly admired her; not that as yet she bothers her head about him."

Thus reasoned Jack; and as he lay he thought, "what a jolly brick old Filters is—nothing of the wet blanket about her. I wouldn't mind living with her one bit; and that would be nuts to her, for she dotes on Emma." Then he thought that he, too, would dote on Emma, and he drew a picture in his mind's eye of Emma, her mother and himself installed together in Remington Place, and he arrived at the conviction that such an arrangement would be conspicuously jolly.

He thought over the best plan of attack, and the bright idea struck him that, in continuance of the joke of yesterday about the five shillings, he could procure a present for Emma, and so open a way to a declaration.

He managed, through his father's influence, to get another holiday—the parent quite appreciated the errand on which his son was bent.

Arrayed in his very best, Jack looked in at his hairdresser's, just, as he termed it, to be titivated, and have a little sweet wash applied. To the hairdresser he said—

"None of your lime juice and glycerine, you know; I ain't going to be adulterated; you are aware, as well as I am, there isn't either lime juice or glycerine in that mixture."

The coiffeur owned it was so.

"Nor any of your bear's grease. Tame bears like you keep don't give out proper fat, such as those who are natives of the aboriginal forests and the icy peaks."

The man knew Jack very well, he was a regular customer, and one given to laying out money on soaps and perfumery, so he rather enjoyed the young man's chaff, laughed, and said—

"Try our bay rum, sir; or would you prefer German wash?"

"Just get me a pencil and paper, will you? I have an inspiration on me."

The hairdresser gave him what he asked for,

and stood by while he produced the following exquisite effusion; Jack read it to him—

"The rose of Sharon,
To keep her hair on,
Tried using the Macassar;
But feared that oil
Her hair might spoil,
So took to German Wasser.

"The maiden fair,
Now found her hair
Hang loose, and dank, and clammy;
Both oil and wash,
She cried, are bosh,
I'll use the Crux Balsammy."

"Now it is a historical fact that she did use this valuable preparation, and it succeeded admirably; indeed, owing to the beauty of her hair, which beauty was much heightened by, if not absolutely derived from the Crux Balsammy, she has been handed down to posterity under the aforesaid poetical name. 'This valuable preparation, may now be obtained of [here you put in your name you know]. Bottles, three and six, five shillings, and seven and six; or in family jars that will keep good in any climate. Observe the label &c., without which none are genuine' and all the rest of it. There! I am in a generous mood; there is your fortune made, Smithers! Now I must be off; no extra charge

for time and paper, I trust? No! very well; it is more gratitude than I expected. Good morning."

Leaving Smithers to think over rather seriously whether he could not do something with the Crux Balsammy, Jack proceeded to procure a present for Emma. "What to get, I'm sure I don't know," he cogitated, "a present is one of the toughest things I know. Of course, jewellery will always go down, but it runs into such a lot of money.

It ended in its being jewellery, and it did run into a lot of money; seventeen pounds ten shillings was a large outlay for Jack, but he thought it best to do the thing handsomely—the cheaper earrings looked so poor by the side of these; added to which, the jeweller assured him he could not do better—they were thoroughly good, and would always be worth two-thirds of the money he was giving for them.

A new hat and a flower completed Jack's costume, and a basket of fruit, with which to propitiate Mrs. Filters, completed his purchases; then he took a cab, so as to arrive cool and fresh at the scene of action.

Guss had not been gone long, when Jack's cab drove up to No. 8, Remington Place. The cab was dismissed, and Jack was shown into the presence of Mrs. and Miss Filters. The elder lady accepted the tribute of fruit very graciously.

"How did you manage to get a holiday again to-day, Jack?" said Emma.

"Where there's a will there's a way, you know," he answered, "I had a matter of . . business to attend to, and the governor squared it for me."

"I daresay, business indeed! you seem to have time to buy fruit and to drive about in Hansoms, what business have you to do, I should like to know?"

"Well, Emma, you ain't very complimentary about the fruit; I think it very kind of Jack, and I shall go and set it in a cool place;" so saying, Mrs. Filters left the room.

Jack did not lose a minute; he pulled out the case containing the earrings, and handing it to Emma, said—

"You recollect my promise yesterday? There, I have been laying out the five bob in memory

of the day; I hope you like my selection, and that you will accept the earrings as my present."

Emma undid the packet, opened the case, and admired the earrings, very much—

"Oh, they are sweetly pretty, how kind of you, Jack But how in the world did you know about it? what did you say about the day?" Her mind was running on the day she and Guss had just been settling.

"How did I know about the day?—seeing we fixed it, I ought to know; you are wool gathering Emma, or up to your larks."

"'We fixed it' you, indeed! I like that."

"Well, we did; it was left to the governor and I, on account of the shop, you know. Mr. Herold left it to us to name the day, as it didn't matter to any of the others—it was nothing to you or Mr. Tarleton."

"Oh, you are talking about yesterday."

"What other day should I be talking about?"

"Oh, Jack, how funny you are; and you say yesterday was nothing to Mr. Tarleton or

. to us." Here Emma laughed, blushed and looked so very handsome that Jack, as he would have termed it, knuckled down at once and proposed.

"Get up, you silly fellow, don't go kneeling like that in your best things you'll spoil them; get up, do, mother will be back directly."

"Emma, I am in earnest, I will get up to please you, but won't you say something to please me;" here he stood up. "Won't you say something to give me a little encouragement? I say, Emma, do say that you will think the matter over."

"Don't talk such rubbish."

"It isn't rubbish, Emma, I am very serious; this is the business I spoke of; it is for this I am here to-day. I come to offer you my heart and my affection, so don't make a joke of it. I know I have often played the tom fool just to amuse, but I can be as serious as any one, and I feel that this is a very solemn moment for me, as the whole happiness of my life depends on your answer to my appeal. Emma, will you be my wife? I will love and care for you"

"Stop, stop, Jack; I like you very much, but I never thought of you in this way; besides, you are too late, I am engaged There, Jack, it is all a mistake, take back your earrings and keep them for some girl who will be able to return your love; let us go on just as if nothing of this sort had ever happened; no one, not even my mother shall be a bit the wiser; there, make haste, put them in your pocket before mother comes back."

"Who is it, Emma?"

"Who? Mr. Tarleton."

"Gracious goodness! that is what you two were doing when I was jumping with Herold. Bother take him, I believe it was all a plant. Oh, Emma, I am dreadfully cut up, I never thought of him; why you talked and laughed all the way down with me, and you hardly spoke to him at all; I don't understand it." And it would be very odd if Jack had comprehended the ways of women.

Mrs. Filters came in, and all was over. She asked him to dine with them that day, to meet Mr. Tarleton.

"Emma, I daresay, has told you how it all is; do come to be my beau, or I shall be the bad

company that three always is, for Mr. 'Erold is engaged to-day, and can't join us at dinner."

Jack pleaded that the business he had spoken of prevented his accepting her kind invitation; indeed, he said—

"I must be going. About that present, Emma, which we were talking of, shall I give it you on your wedding day?"

"If you think well of it by then, I shall be very glad to accept it, Jack."

Then he went. It was a bad job, a holiday thrown away, seventeen pounds ten shillings badly laid out, and all his hopes destroyed! The jeweller had said the earrings would always be worth two-thirds of their value—that jeweller was wrong, they were worth nothing now.

He felt he was rightly served; he admired Emma very much, and liked her. But in truth he did not absolutely love her; so he felt sore at his defeat, and was conscious that he deserved it, as he certainly had considered the matter of her money as well as her beauty and amiability.

The party of three went off very well—Jack's fruit was admired and eaten—all went merrily as those bells soon to be set a ringing.

CHAPTER VIII.

SETON'S ENGAGEMENTS.

It was so rare a thing for Seton to have an engagement that, to prevent any idea of mystery on the subject, it is well to state at once what the engagement was.

It will be remembered that Maria Hustler had a cousin named Bob, and that she had married this cousin. Bob, or to use his legal name, Robert Hustler, had come up to town on a matter of business, very serious business indeed.

The new owner of Westerham, in which property was vested rights of enjoyment of both banks of the river, which encircled a large portion of the estate, and of all fish that swam within its waters, had threatened proceedings against old Hustler, Maria's father, because he persisted in catching eels at his mill. The mill itself did not belong to the Westerham estate, it had once formed a part of it, but that was before the time of the Heralds; and as long as memory

ran the miller had been in the habit of catching eels in certain boxes or traps, constructed expressly for that purpose.

The new lord asserted that he had the sole right to all the fish in the river; that the land beneath the water belonged to him; that he could fish from either bank, and no one had a right even to throw a line into the water from their own land; that when the original estate was divided, these rights were reserved to the lord of the manor of Westerham.

The miller declared that all millers were entitled to fish in their own mill pools, that he would fish from his own land, and that he had an immemorial right to such eels as he could take in the manner aforesaid. He also denied that eels were fish, quoting in his favour the dictum of a local authority, an eminent retired poacher, who laid it down very clearly, "that eels were eels and fish were fish, so eels wern't fish."

The lord of Westerham rejoined that the local authority was a fool, and that he intended to enforce his rights through the strong arm of his gamekeepers and the stronger arm of the law.

Old Hustler thereon held council with his

son-in-law, and between them they arrived at the conclusion that Seton ought to know how the thing was; he must have knowledge on the subject from his father, and he had obtained some celebrity as a lawyer, it being well known that he had been the active prosecutor of a Chancery suit.

So Bob was deputed to get his opinion and ask his advice in this important matter. Old Hustler declared he "would spend his last farthing, rather than be oppressed by a man who had come from no one knew where to ride rough shod over them; he would rather go to gaol, or end his days in the workus than knuckle under."

Mrs. Hustler thought it best to let the eels go, they were slippery things.

Maria felt sure that Seton would be able and willing to give wise counsel, and so prevent her father from going to law.

Bob thought as his wife did, being a model husband, except that, being also a Hustler, he did sometimes patronize the extract of malt too freely.

Full of his errand, and quite new to London,

Bob arrived at Remington Place on the day of the dinner party at Greenwich; finding Seton was away for the day, he put up at an ancient inn in Holborn, and waited on him again next morning at an early hour.

They had a long talk about the fishery, and then Seton thought he should be doing a kind and a wise thing if he took charge of Bob for the day, and showed him the sights, thus keeping him out of harm's way and from the toils of skittle sharpers, ring droppers, or men who had come in for large fortunes and who wished to give sums of money to those who proved worthy of their confidence by entrusting them with their purses or pocket books till they were out of sight: and the fifty other dodges practised on unwary countrymen. Bob had never been in London before, and was very green in the ways of town. He was to leave again next day, so if he could be kept out of mischief till bed time all would be well with him.

Bob was not the sort of man that every one would have cared to go about town with; but Seton was not fastidious, he was a simple-minded, straightforward young fellow, a thorough

gentleman, and not to be abashed by things that would have made a snob turn pale with dread, lest he should be seen in company with one capable of perpetrating such outrages.

It is not pleasant, perhaps, to walk up Regent Street in company with a man who wears a low crowned white hat, made of a long fluffy material, especially if he, for the most part, carries that hat in his hand, and mops his head with a red and yellow handkerchief held in the other hand. Nor is it wholly agreeable to be linked with one who talks so loudly and with such a strong Avonshire accent, that wherever he stops, groups of admiring boys gather round and discuss his personal appearance, offering bets as to where he comes from.

It cannot be said that Seton enjoyed the task he had set himself, but he went through with it manfully; he was doing his duty by Bob, and he thought that he was also in some measure repaying Maria for the delight she had afforded him in the old days, when he went boating to the mill, for the pleasure he had in those days taken in her presence, and the still greater pleasure with which in her absence he had idealized

her charms, and woven fairy palaces, wherein she and he would dwell together—those fairy palaces of which Gladys was the true owner, and the idealized Maria but the temporary usurper.

He stuck to Bob; showed him the principal streets, St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, Madame Tussaud's, Buckingham Palace, the National Gallery, and the Duke of Wellington's house. They could not find time for the Tower, as they must dine early in order to go to the theatre.

One of the Strand eating houses was selected by Seton as the place likely to be satisfactory to Bob, and also handy to the theatres.

The waiter was instructed to bring them the dinner ready provided for the day, only no soup, as Bob declared he did not like spoon food.

Unfortunately the fish for the day was stewed eels, not that stewed eels are at all bad things, but there was a want of novelty about eels to Bob, moreover it re-opened the flood gates of the water question, with the additional disadvantage, that from the fact of eels being served as fish, it was clear that at any rate in London eels were regarded as fish, in spite of the eminent Avonshire authority, before quoted.

A very first-rate haunch of mutton turned the discourse, and put Bob into excellent spirits; he admitted that the draught stout was a very fair tap, "Not like our home brewed beer, though, Mr. Herold, three year's old, and with a bead in it; give me a bead in it, that's the tipple for me."

Seton remarked that the head waiter was especially attentive to them, and he seemed to have a sort of recollection of his face. At last, when cheese, salad, and port were placed before them, as the crown of their repast, seeing that the waiter was evidently scrutinizing him, he said—"I think I must have seen you somewhere before, haven't I?"

"Yes-sir, I think so; it is Mr. Herold, isn't it?"

"My name is Herold, but I can't recall"

"My name, sir? my name is Weltenbury; I am better known as Charles in this establishment, sir; but in Creamington, at Wellingtonia Lodge, when I was living with Colonel Warrington, sir, I was known by my proper name of Weltenbury, sir. I remember you very well, sir, you came down to see the colonel, sir, but . . . well, ahem you didn't see him."

"No, I had my journey for nothing. I thought I recollected your face."

"If I may make bold to say it, sir, you not only had the journey for nothing, but others won't do you much good either, if you don't look sharp."

"What do you mean!"

"Well, sir, this ain't a place to talk about things, but if you would like to hear more, I shall have pleasure in waiting on you, sir. I should like to give her a bit of a shove."

"You mean"

"Well, sir, W stands for something besides woman. It is best not to say names in public sir Coming, sir, coming."

Bob was getting fidgetty, afraid that the curtain might draw up before they arrived in the theatre; so they set off to the Haymarket after Seton had made an appointment with Mr. Weltenbury for the next day. His tip to Mr. Weltenbury was liberal, and caused him to mutter; "Quite the gentleman as for the lady, why didn't she act as such; even though she wasn't brought up to it, she might have come out when she got pushed up; a stingy

beggar, not so much as a fiver on leaving; well my lady, I can tell what you won't like, and I will."

At the Haymarket, Bob was much entertained; they had places in the boxes, and really Seton deserved great credit for the maintenance of his equanimity. Bob would applaud loudly, and laugh boisterously; when Box and Cox came on, and the audience was appealed to as to what a woman who eat red herrings would drink, he banged the cushion with his great fist, and roared. Some of the people round were inclined to be angry, but seeing he was a countryman, and fairly enjoying himself, they ended by laughing heartily, and the pit almost cheered him.

Very glad to retire from such public demonstrations, Seton took Bob to finish the evening with a lobster, and soon he deeply regretted that he had done so. They had gone at hazard into one of the eating shops near the theatre and an excellent lobster, with its accompaniments, was set before them; the lobster consumed, they had a glass of something hot, just to top up with. The maltster began to get jolly, and, unfortunately, a band of the damsels who used to make life

hideous in those regions, came in; two detached themselves from their fellows and came uninvited to the table where Bob and Seton sat.

One took up Seton's glass and drank off its contents with a laugh and a, "Here's to your good health, my ducky." Seton said nothing, but looked anxiously for the waiter to settle the bill, and get out of the place as soon as possible.

Bob, on the other hand, had taken enough liquor to make him resent the attempt to seize his glass, so when the woman who came to his side the table tried to follow her friend's example, he snatched the glass from her, thereby spilling the contents over her silk dress. She screamed, and declared he had spoilt her dress and must pay for it; her friend backed her up, and the general company sided with her.

"Give the young woman a sovereign and have done with it," was the award of a quiet looking man who sat near. Seton did not see it; and Bob declared that he would see the young woman d—— first, "what right had zhee to coom and tak' my drop o' drink, I zhood loike to knaw?" he said.

Then some of the young women swooped down

on Bob and smashed in the fluffy hat; Seton, too, was somewhat pulled about. It ended by the proprietor appearing and clearing the whole party of women into the street. Seton and Bob repaired damages, paid their bill, and departed, after Bob had been supplied with a glass of grog to replace the spilt one.

They went off arm in arm, escaped from the mob in the Haymarket, and got into the quieter region of Regent Street. When they were getting near Oxford Street, on their way to Holborn, Bob, who had scornfully rejected all the overtures of the noisy women they had met, persisted in listening to the dulcet tones of one who now appealed to his charity; she said she was homeless and would he be kind to a poor young woman who had nowhere to go to?

She was good looking and young; she touched Bob's arm gently, and looked into his face imploringly.

He said—"Lunnon is a bad place for the like of you to be about this time o'night, my dear; and he felt for some loose silver and gave it to her.

The girl, in a transport of gratitude, threw her

arms round him, and sobbed on his shoulder; then, expressing a hope "that he, too, might meet a friend when one was most wanting," she disappeared round a neighbouring corner.

"Dang'd if this Lunnon ain't a queer place; poor girl, she was uncommon grateful, wasn't she, Mr. Herold? you oughtn't to have tried to stop me giving her a trifle, she might have been driven into the Lord knows what crime or something, if I hadn't helped her . . . Hulloa . . . what's this here?"

It should have been "what isn't here?" for the watch was certainly gone, and the chain dangled free; on further examination, it turned out that Bob's purse was also missing. The girl had not, however, made a very extensive haul, as the watch was a silver one, and the purse only contained two sovereigns. Bob was in the habit of carrying a good bit of money about with him, and for that purpose he had an inner pocket to his waistcoat, there the bulk of his money was still in safety, so no great harm was done; he had to pay for his experience of the London streets and of human nature, but not a ruinous price.

They had no further adventure, and they parted heartily; Seton promising to look into the great fishery question, and write fully on the subject; then he went home, very glad to have done with Bob as a London sightseer, and much wondering what in the world Weltenbury could have to say to him.

* * * * * *

Next morning, punctual to the hour agreed upon, Mr. Weltenbury presented himself in Remington Place.

"Sit down, Mr. Weltenbury;" and Mr. Weltenbury sat down. "Now, will you kindly let me know what it is you have to say to me about what we were discussing yesterday, about, I suppose Wellingtonia Lodge and its inhabitants, or one of them."

"Recollect, Mr. Herold, it is on your business, not mine, that I'm here to day, except, of course, anything that brings me remuneration is in a way my business."

"I perfectly understand that you have been kind enough to come here to tell me something you think I ought to be told; of course your

time is valuable, and your trouble should be repaid."

"That is the way to put it, sir; it is a pleasure to have to deal with a gentleman like you, who has the instincts of one, that's what it is to be a real gentleman; why, sir, if you believe me, that lady never so much as give me a five-pound note, and she quite in my hands, as one might say; I am sure no real lady would have acted such; I do like to deal with gentlefolks."

"Well, Mr. Weltenbury, if your information is worth having, I am sure I won't grudge you the five pounds you speak of; now to business."

"Beg pardon, sir, but if money isn't business it is the whole heart of it, sir. And a very pretty business she is making of it. I suppose, sir, the colonel will cut up pretty comfortable when his time comes."

"Yes, he is very rich."

"And you are, I know, sir, his natural heir; very fond the old gentleman is of you, too, sir; he sits up and cries about you and your affairs, sir, when he is in one of his weak fits. But mind what I say, sir, if

you don't look out that lady will get it all; he is quite under her thumb; she sits on him sir, sits right down on him. He blows and blusters a bit now and then, but down he goes, and she sits on him, that is the word, sir."

"How do you mean? What does she do?"

"You remember the day you came down to Creamington, sir, when I was part of the establishment?"

"Very well!"

"Then, sir, you will remember that you did not get a sight of the old gent."

"No, Mrs. Warrington said he was asleep."

"Not a bit of it, sir, he was anxiously expecting to see you, but you went away without coming up; he was terribly cut up about it. She said you had been in such a hurry to catch the train, that you couldn't stop. 'Why didn't he come up?' the colonel asked, over and over again, I should think a matter of twenty times or more; at last she told him the fact was, 'you wanted money for your law suit, and she did not encourage you to bother him about it.' Then she went on about the law suit, and 'what a pity it was your being

so foolish about money,' and ever so much more. He groaned and cried, and said 'it was very hard on him.' I heard it all plain enough, and that was the beginning of me and the lady falling out; for she left the room quite sudden, and nearly ran against me, before I had time to get away from the door. There was I with not so much as a pair of boots in my hand, quite took aback, I own. All the more reason that a lady should not have been down on me; but she never thought properly like that about it; she just said, in a most aggravating manner,

"'Now Weltenbury, I won't have it.'

"'Have what, mam,' says I ?

"'Have listening,' says she.

"'I did not know there was secrets,' I replied with dignity.

"'Secrets or not secrets, I give you a month's warning.'

"'Well, mam,' says I, 'perhaps it would suit your book to have the house and the colonel all to yourself; but don't you think it wiser to make a friend than an enemy, as things is? you can't do without some one, and I should be happy to oblige a lady.'

"She looked at me and said, as cool as a iced cup, 'I am much obliged to you, Weltenbury, but I do not want friends in your sphere; you can go, and remember this day month; if you behave yourself properly till then, this shall not go against you;' with this my lady waved me downstairs. I was never so took aback in my life, and I was weak enough to say 'thank you, mam,' meaning it—for there was a look on her face which might be taken as a gratuity at parting.

"The upshot of it all was, sir, that I kept myself pretty cautious till the morning I went. Then, I give you my word, sir, she just paid down my wages, and said, 'the colonel will give you a character if you apply for it; good morning, Weltenbury.'

"I stared and stared at her, sir; it was more than I could take in; I can hardly tell you what I felt, sir. There was, right over-against me, that lady, who had appealed to me, as plain as she could speak, by word of eye, not to take part against her; she had said to me, 'if you behave yourself properly till then, this shan't go against you;' now, sir, as a gentleman,

what could that mean, but a tip to keep quiet? And now she was outraging my feelings, with just my wages, not a penny more; not even a five-pound note to show we parted comfortable. No sir, it wasn't the thing at all, sir, not at all."

"I hardly see," put in Seton, "what particular interest I have in your money transactions with Mrs. Warrington."

"I like to be on the square, sir, and I just let you behind the curtain with the lady and me, to show you that I am not in her interest, but ready and willing to pay her off for insulting me."

"I quite understand your dislike of her, but how are you serving me in all this?"

"Why, sir, ain't I serving you in telling you that she sits on him, and is squeezing him down; have you ever seen him since, sir, that is the question?"

"No, never; I have had no chance. I have been ill, and very busy, but Mrs. Warrington has written to me several times."

"Not the colonel himself, sir?"

"No; she wrote for him, as he was not very well."

"She looked at me and said, as cool as a iced cup, 'I am much obliged to you, Weltenbury, but I do not want friends in your sphere; you can go, and remember this day month; if you behave yourself properly till then, this shall not go against you;' with this my lady waved me downstairs. I was never so took aback in my life, and I was weak enough to say 'thank you, mam,' meaning it—for there was a look on her face which might be taken as a gratuity at parting.

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would go back from your word, and I don't think it now."

"I did not promise you five pounds, unconditionally. I said if your information was worth having, I would not grudge you five pounds; and I must say that I do not think what you have told me is worth five pounds."

"Then you don't mind seeing that lady at the head of your uncle's table, cutting and carving his money as she likes, instead of eating her victuals at a side table; depend on it she wants to put you to the side table, sir. However, if you are content to sit out in the cold, it isn't my business, but I am sorry I lost my time coming here, that is all, sir."

"Rather than you should think I have done you any injustice, Mr. Weltenbury, I will give you the five pounds, the more so as I shall so far act on your information as to go down to Creamington, and, if possible, see my uncle."

"I knew when you came to look at it the right way, Mr. Herold, you would act the gentleman, sir; depend on it the colonel won't hold out very long, he can't carry away the

money with him; and I do hope, sir, you will look out, and not let that ——, saving your presence, and letting alone her being your uncle's wife, sir, get it." So saying, Mr. Weltenbury pocketed a five pound note.

"There, I don't want to hear any epithets of that sort, Mr. Weltenbury."

"Excuse me, sir, but my tongue ran away with me; that lady so jarred on me, sir, hurt my feelings so much, that I sometimes forget myself when I speak of her, sir; and now, as my time is valuable, I will wish you a good morning, Mr. Herold; when you come into the fortune, if you will please send the fifty pounds we spoke of to me at our establishment in the Strand, it will be sure to find me. I like public service better than private now I have got used to it. I would sooner be head, or even share at a first class house like ours, than in any private family. Good morning, Mr. Herold."

Seton was glad when the door closed on Mr. Weltenbury and his injured feelings; he regretted his five pounds, and thought himself foolish to have given it. "This sort of thing won't do at all," he said to himself, five

bered, he never used to blow her up like the others. I wonder how she got such a hold on him? what cunning creatures women are except of course some. This exception was caused by thoughts of Gladys, then of Emma, then of Mrs. Filters and others. In the end he admitted that possibly Eliza was the exception and not the rule.

CHAPTER IX.

A QUEER WOMAN.

CREAMINGTON was at its best; the trees were still unfaded, and the well watered, orderly little town was smiling as ever, and seemed full of pretty faces that were amazingly fresh, compared with those Seton usually encountered in the London streets.

Wellingtonia Lodge looked as it had looked ever since Colonel Warrington had inhabited it, glossy and bright as paint could make it. In the garden, the trees from which it took its name, had shot up so vigorously it seemed as though a day must come when they would lift up the house, colonel, Eliza, and all, and convert it into a tree dwelling.

A successor to Mr. Weltenbury answered to Seton's ring, and in reply to his question of—

"Is Colonel Warrington at home?" made answer, "What name, if you please, sir?"

Seton handed in his card, the door was reclosed,

and there was a long interval of waiting, followed by the re-appearance of the servant, the unlocking of the outer gates, and the admittance of Seton into the fortress. He was shown into the drawing room; it looked as if it had never been touched since he was last there, so unaltered was everything in it.

He had barely time to look round when in came Eliza, with palm outstretched, as though each moment was a lost one, till she clasped the hand of her husband's nephew.

"How do you do, Seton? I am so very glad to see you. You are looking poorly still, are you quite recovered? Sit down do, and let me hear all about you; we have been so anxious."

Seton reported his general health as tolerable, and his happiness as great at seeing her looking so well; then he asked after his uncle.

"Oh thanks, he is as well as we can expect you know at his time of life; he sometimes worries a good deal about your affairs, but I do what I can; you may rely on me, Seton." Here she looked quite affectionately at him. "You always were a favourite with me, you know. Now tell me, how is Gladys, and when

is it to be? I suppose now you have got over that nasty law business you won't delay much longer. 'Happy is the wooing that's not long a doing,' you know, and you have been full long about it, haven't you?"

"I don't see how it is to come about at all; we shouldn't have enough to live on."

"So you have come down to see what the colonel will do, is that it? Oh, you sly boy."

At this Seton got furiously red. In a certain way this was the truth; he had not come down with any idea of getting a present subsidy, but certainly he had come to see how things lay as to the future. He had tried to persuade himself that his errand was only to see how his uncle carried his declining years, to press his three fingers once again, and give him such support and comfort as he might be in need of against the wiles of the smiling woman, who was sitting opposite to him, reading his thoughts as easily as large type; but in his heart he knew that a craving for a portion of his uncle's money was at the bottom of the motives that had brought him there.

She continued—"Oh, you needn't blush about

it, I am sure it is quite natural you should wish to have some of your uncle's money, but, remember I am your friend, and speak in your interest; you must be very cautious. As we are his two nearest relations, I don't mind telling you that he gets more and more miserly; he never was extravagant—you know what I mean—and latterly it has grown on him, and I can hardly get cheques for the regular expenses of the house; he writes them as if they were death warrants and he to be the sufferer. So I wouldn't advise you to talk about money with him."

"I am sure I had not the remotest idea of doing so."

"Quite right, there is nothing like prudence; I understand him, leave him to me, Seton, and you will find it will be all right; we cannot hope that he will be spared to us for a very great length of time."

"I assure you I didn't come about money at all; I merely came to see him, as I have not done so for a long time."

"Of course, I quite understand, it is so natural that you should wish to keep in his good books."

"I can't deny that his favour is a matter of

the greatest importance to me, seeing how I am placed."

"Tell me all about your affairs; you know I am now your aunt, you can confide in me. I always remember that you were the first to congratulate me on my marriage; some of them have never done so yet; I have a very good memory. Now, Seton, tell me exactly how you are situated."

She spoke so openly, and seemed so friendly, that Seton dismissed Mr. Weltenbury's allegations against her, and told her how he was circumstanced. He found himself telling this woman, against whose wiles he had been armed, and whose plots he had come down specially to counteract, all his private affairs. She listened patiently to the tale of his losses and his worries; she sympathized with him, and quite won him by the pleasant manner in which she consoled and comforted him.

At last she looked at her watch, and exclaimed, "dear me, how the time has flown. I was so interested that I have been forgetting your poor uncle; now I must go to him. When will you come again? how long are you going to stay in Creamington?"

"A day or two, I think. Can't I see my uncle to-day?"

"Hardly to-day. He had such a bad night, I should be afraid to say to-day."

"I am very sorry for that; however, I am in no great hurry to leave Creamington till I have seen him; perhaps to-morrow will be more convenient. I will look in to-morrow, please. What time do you think the most likely to suit him?"

After a moment's reflection, Eliza replied—

"The mornings are generally his worst times. Of afternoons he is uncertain, as he falls asleep, and I don't like to wake him, for at night he has what the doctor calls insomnia, which seems to be something that prevents his sleeping. Couldn't you dine with us to-morrow?—that would be best." Here she looked at him with a bright triumphant smile, as if she had just hit on an entirely new and original idea that gave a happy solution to a very difficult problem indeed.

Seton could dine with them on the morrow, seeing he had no earthly thing to do in Creamington but to see his uncle; so he accepted the invitation.

"Then we shall see you at half-past five; we *keep the old* early hours, you see. Now you must

run away, and I must run off, too." Here she rang the bell; then she shook Seton very warmly by the hand; "there, good-bye, don't forget half-past five to-morrow."

She followed him into the hall, smiled and nodded at him, while the servant undid the locks and chains, and ushered him out of his uncle's house.

The interview had been very pleasant; Eliza had been more than kind; but he had not seen his uncle. Away from the fascinations of Mrs. Warrington, Seton wondered whether she did take an interest in him, or whether she was simply fooling him; she was a queer woman, he thought; in any case he should see his uncle to-morrow.

The following day turned out very wet, the rain came down in torrents, as it will do in Creamington sometimes; it came down in a steady drench, like water from a watering pot. The Creamy was swollen, and muddier than ever; the gravelled walks became soppy; the flowers were beaten down; and the human flowers could not get out, except in such garb that they ceased to be attractive.

Seton had nothing to do but stare from the inn windows at such incidents as the weather gave riseto, o r permitted in the streets. He watched the flys go by, with their horses splish splashing as they spurted the water with their feet, and their drivers looking as shiny as though they were oiled all over, and as dripping as rocks from which a wave has just retreated. He saw the postmen, wetter if possible than the flymen, hurrying on their errands, and he wondered how they managed to keep their letters dry.

Drenched dogs, hardly to be recognized by their own mistresses, paddled along at the heels of those ladies who were so thoughtless as to take their pets out on such a day; literally at their heels, for the dresses were held high, showing those heels, above which were very visible the saturated boots and a patch of splodged petticoat.

Seton grew quite melancholy as he gazed. Nothing is more charming or attractive than a glimpse of a neat ankle delicately peeping from the dress that just discloses its beauties quite unconsciously to the owner of the ankle, or apparently so; but a vista of wet boot, crowned by slopped stockings, liberally displayed, above

which a draggled petticoat is seen, is most depressing; and Seton had nothing to do but gaze at such things. He counted the number of those who wore white petticoats, and he made bets with himself for, or against, the relative number of the coloured ones; even this amusement palled on him, and he left the window wondering that a town which had shown such pretty faces, revealed such unprepossessing feet; perhaps it was that only the unlovely ventured out on such a day. He could not see the faces for the umbrellas, and he could not see the figures for the cloaks; so this thing remained a mystery to him.

The daily papers came; lunch passed away a short half hour; an old billiard table helped a little. Then more window, more flys, more postmen, dogs and draggled skirts, for still the rain came down relentlessly. Seton was very much relieved when the time came to dress for dinner; he thought Creamington was a very dull place, and he determined that if he could help it he would pass no other day as he had this one; when once he had seen his uncle he would go back to town.

Arrived at Wellingtonia Lodge, he was shown

into the drawing room, and found Eliza ready to receive him, but his uncle was not there.

"What a day it has been; I fear you could not get out at all, could you, Seton?"

"No, indeed, the rain never ceased for a moment."

"It does pour here sometimes, but we must not grumble. I daresay it is good for some one."

"How is my uncle to-day, does this weather affect him?"

"No, not at all; I think he is better than usual; weather that seems to upset other people rather agrees with him. You must expect to see him a good deal altered since you last saw him; he is a good deal aged."

Dinner was announced, and Eliza, taking Seton's arm, said—

"I wish I had a young lady for you; I should say a certain young lady, I suppose?"

He stammered something, and then, as they walked through the folding doors, he became aware that the colonel, who was seated at the dinner table, was looking at them.

"How do, Seton?" and the uncle and nephew exchanged a limp grip of three fingers to a

whole hand; "what good wind blows you here?"

Eliza and Seton sat down; over the soup, Seton gave an account of his movements. The colonel did not take soup, as Eliza said to the servant, "your master won't take any;" and consequently the plate he was about to give the colonel was set down to Seton. The colonel looked as if he would have liked some soup, and said—

"Don't you think that to-day, I might"

"No, colonel, not to-day; you shall have some fish. There is turbot, of which you are so fond, you know, and you would only spill it if I didn't give it you myself."

Seton could hardly believe his ears; it nearly took his breath away to see the colonel patiently submit to this dictation; he fully expected one of the old outbursts, but none came; he took the deprivation meekly. Seton regarding him more closely, noted his wasted form and lack-lustre eyes; then he ceased to wonder, for the colonel of old days no longer existed; the uncle who sat there was not the man who had quarrelled

with his mother because he had been put into the blue chamber, instead of into the tapestry room, at Westerham.

Eliza ordered everything; his uncle seemed to be a mere cypher; she had provided an excellent dinner in Seton's honour, but his uncle was allowed to eat very little of it—just some fish, a morsel of sweet-bread, and a very thin slice of beef, was his allowance; he was permitted to help himself to vegetables, but when the man handed round the mustard, Eliza said, "Do not give your master mustard, I told you before your master never takes mustard." Then she explained to Seton, "he does eat such a quantity, if he helps himself, and it is not good for him. It always disagrees with you afterwards, does it not, colonel?"

The colonel fully assented.

She was liberal to him in the matter of wine, and seemed to enjoy her glass of port herself. So after dinner they all warmed up a little, and the colonel even told an old story or two, but the points of the stories were blunt, and the manner very different from old times.

Opposite Seton still hung his distinguished

ancestor, whose wart had so narrowly escaped obliteration; now, the descendant who had objected to the family excrescence, and wished to idealize that face, was quite past ordering anything either to come or go, to be altered or improved; and the woman who had so often waited at that table was now sitting at its head its legal mistress! It all seemed very strange to Seton.

Once or twice his uncle asked about the law suit, and he seemed not to understand that it was over; he asked after Gladys, but sometimes spoke of her as Dora, as though he confused them in his mind.

Tea was brought into them where they were; and soon afterwards Eliza said, "it was time for the colonel to go to bed; would Seton mind waiting till she came back; she should not be long, but she always made it a rule to see to his comfort herself."

Seton said, "he did not at all mind waiting;" so the bell was rung, and the man was ordered to take candles into the drawing room. By the fuss made, it was clear to Seton that he had not been intended to remain; but it was too late to

recede now, so with a repetition of the three fingers' squeeze, he left his uncle, and went into the other room.

The old man, as he wished him good-night, looked very wistfully at him, and said—

"God bless you, Seton, things are sure to mend, you know, sure to mend; give my love to Dora."

It was nearly three-quarters of an hour before Eliza entered the drawing room. "So sorry to have kept you," she said, "but I have to see to him myself, there is no trusting servants, those men never do things comfortably; you know we are called ministering angels, and I do think men, as nurses, are the very reverse, they seem to be all angles, to knock up against everything, and they do creak so; did you ever notice how men servants creak when in a sick room?"

Seton never had noticed that peculiarity, and he offered his apologies for remaining so late.

"Oh, don't mention it; we keep such ridiculously early hours, one forgets that all the world are not like ourselves; and I thought perhaps you would be wanting to smoke, or something, you young men are always smoking, or doing

something you ought not, ain't you? I daresay in London you lead a sad life, and go to all sorts of places?"

"I generally read till bed time; once in a way I go to the theatre, but not often."

"There, I didn't expect you to tell me all your wild doings, the less said about those things the better; young men will be young men, but you will give it all up when you marry, I have no doubt."

"Really, I have nothing to give up; I can assure you that I"

"Come, Seton, don't get excited; I daresay you are no worse than others."

"I hope not; I don't want to run down any one, but certainly I am not given to things such as you seem to hint at."

"My dear Seton, I don't reproach you; little stories have reached us, but I always told the colonel not to make a fuss, and that he had once been young; don't blush, there is no harm in being young."

"Those stories you speak of were not true; they were just a pack of lies."

"I am sure I am very glad to hear it;" here

Eliza yawned; "there is nothing like being good. And so you leave us to-morrow?"

"Yes, I must get back to-morrow; I will call in the morning, and take my chance of seeing my uncle again, if I may make an early visit."

"If you may—why of course you may, you foolish fellow; we shall be only too delighted to see you at any time; I only wish we had a spare room to offer you, but you know how we are situated; why people build houses with only two decent bedrooms I can't imagine, and you know we use them both, now your uncle is seldom able to get downstairs."

"Don't mention it, Mrs. Warrington; I think I will now say good night."

"Didn't you order your fly to come for you?"

"No, I forgot to tell him; I thought he would come about the usual time; I forgot how early you were."

"I forgive the cut at me, Seton, and to show you that I am not in any hurry to get rid of you, I shan't allow you to go, certainly not while it is raining as it is. I hear it on the verandah."

They sat on, and the conversation flagged a

little. Then Seton asked that the man might be sent to see after the fly. This was done.

Eliza now insisted on Seton taking a glass more wine before he left; she fetched the decanters from the other room, and set him a good example, by taking two large glasses of port. Then she grew talkative; told Seton that she was recommended to take plenty of port, as she was subject to a sort of spasm that proceeded from her heart, and the doctor had ordered that wine as a sort of specific against such qualms.

She took another glass, and passed on to speak of her own early days; days when her father, who it seemed had been a teacher of mathematics in a school, was still alive, and she, motherless, had battled with the world, or that part of it which was represented by the lodging house in which they resided. After a while her father had died, and she essayed the duties of a nursery governess; but, she continued—"I was then too good-looking for anything of that sort; there was always some trouble or jealousy, and I can tell you I had to look very carefully to myself—oh, you young men, you have a deal to

answer for." Here she shook her finger at Seton, who was much interested in hearing something of those days before she was a servant to his uncle.

Shaking her finger at Seton, as if he was personally responsible for many nursery governesses, she went on—"At last I gave it up, thinking I should be more independent as a servant; I had seen how much better they were treated, and how much more liberty they were allowed; so having studied the arrangements and the cleanings, I sank my pride, and became a parlour maid; really those little flat caps were very becoming, and nothing sets off a figure more than a plain print, don't you think so?"

"I always did think so when I was here," replied Seton courteously.

The fly arrived, and Eliza squeezed his hand warmly at parting. "Be sure and come to-morrow morning, mind you don't go without our seeing you again; there, good night, what hours we are keeping. I declare you are good company; the time has gone so quickly hasn't it? Good-night."

The interview next morning was productive of

very little. The colonel was not visible, and Eliza, with the most perfect frankness, said all that was pleasant and agreeable. She assured Seton that she would watch his interests as if he were indeed her nephew; told him that she always had liked him, and again spoke bitterly of the conduct of the others.

"Be sure and write, let me know all about Gladys, and when it is to be, you know; mind and don't get into any more scrapes in London. I know what you young men are. Good-bye, good-bye, and don't be so long coming to see us again."

On the return journey Seton puzzled over all the words and actions of this woman, and extracted but little comfort from them. He felt that he had gained nothing by his journey, and that the five pounds he had given to Mr. Weltenbury might as well have been pitched into the now foaming Creamy.

She might be a designing woman, perhaps she was; on that subject he was divided in his opinion; he could not make her out, but in any case he was powerless.

He had seen his uncle, whose health was

evidently failing fast; but except that he confused names, and missed some of the points in his old stories, he seemed clear in his head, and to be able to manage his money matters; as far as he could judge, he still possessed what he believed the lawyers called a sound disposing mind. Certainly he was quite under Eliza's thumb, and she did sit on him, as Mr. Weltenbury had figuratively expressed it.

She sat on him, but she treated him well, and her dictatorship was exercised for his benefit, so nothing could be made of that; and she was his wife. On the whole, Seton came to the conclusion that his interest lay in putting confidence in her; he also perceived that he was powerless to do otherwise. She really seemed fond of him, if indeed it was not all put on.

She is a queer woman. That was all he could make of her, and was all that he arrived at through Mr. Weltenbury and his visit to Creamington.

London once more. In Remington Place he found that Emma was just about to start on a visit to the "Quarries."

CHAPTER X.

EMMA GOES INTO THE COUNTRY.

THE news of Guss's engagement was, on the whole, very agreeable to the inhabitants of the "Quarries." Mrs. Tarleton had been much taken with Emma, and not being a fine lady herself, she did not think the alliance undesirable because Emma's father had been in business and her mother dropped her H's; really there was no other thing that could be found fault with.

In the letter containing the news of the engagement, Guss had expressed his determination to give up the active pursuit of his profession; this made things assume a very rose-coloured aspect, and Mrs. Tarleton was ready to think all good things of a girl so richly endowed in every way, and one who possessed a mother so especially capable in the matter of housekeeping, although there was the heresy regarding the omission of roast onion in the

chicken broth. "Gladys my dear, we must invite Emma to the "Quarries;" mentally Mrs. Tarleton was bent on counter-mining any such heresies under which Emma might be labouring.

Gladys was delighted at the whole affair; she was glad that Guss had found some one else, and now it was quite clear to her that Emma had not been in love with Seton. She felt herself incapable of straying from her first love, so she believed that all other girls must be the same.

"That will be famous," was her answer to her aunt, when she said, "We must invite Emma to the 'Quarries.'"

The invitation was written, sent, and accepted.

Reflecting on the matter after the letter was gone, Mrs. Tarleton's heart failed her a little. Would this young woman, when married, seek to oust her from her authority? Would she endeavour to wrest from her those sacred keys which guarded all her treasures? was it possible that she would wish to give out the soap and the candles, the tea and the sugar? Truly the absolute command would still rest with herself;

but earnestly desiring, as she did, that her boy, as she called the tall, broad-shouldered man, should dwell at the "Quarries," might he not back up his wife in her wish to push his old mother aside—she had heard of such things. She even knew of a case where that very atrocity had been committed; where an acquaintance of hers, a good manager too, had been shelved in her own house. She had remonstrated with this friend on her folly, but the lady had said, "Peace and quietness is more to me than all the weights and scales in Avonshire;" she had sobbed when she thought of the reckless dealing she feared went on in currants and in raisins, starch and mustard; she had wept at the consumption of onions and Bath brick, of washing soda and of sand paper; but she made no effort to regain her authority; her keys were gone from her for ever; she was a poor occupationless creature, only knitting was left to her; she had nothing to look forward to but the turning of the heels of those stockings she worked at with such patience; she had obtained peace, but at a price that was fearful to contemplate.

Mrs. Tarleton pondered over this woman's fate, and wondered whether she herself could ever become so weak and spiritless a creature as to abandon the rule over her own store room.

The linen closet she felt confident about; no daughter-in-law should, while she had power to walk the house, invade that sanctuary except to do homage at the sight of those treasures which she had guarded from moth and mildew through all these years. Metaphorically speaking, she would set her back against the linen closet; the "Quarries," was her castle, and she would defend her cupboards and her storeroom until in distant years a time should come when the keys would be too heavy for her hand, and her failing sight would render her unequal to the counting of the currants, and the candles. Then she would sit and knit, be satisfied with turning heels, and ensue peace and quietness; but she had many good years yet to pass before such a time would come.

Now that her boy was restored to her, all things would go lightly with her, the years would pass away, leaving small traces. Gladys should marry Seton; she could well afford to

make up their income a bit for them. She felt very tenderly towards Gladys; she remembered how unfair she had been to her in those days of desolation, when the postman brought no tidings of her boy, when day after day was passed in watching for news which never came. She remembered how cross and unjust she had been, and she remembered that Gladys had been patient and sweet-tempered through it all. She cried when she recollected that she positively believed Gladys was deserting her to take pleasure in London; "poor darling," I said, "let her go and amuse herself, when her errand was to nurse Seton who, as they thought, was dying." Aunt Mary remembered all these things, and she determined to make up for her wicked thoughts by liberal actions.

Gladys never even thought of forgiving her aunt, who was as good to her again as usual; she imputed no blame to her for her temporary unkindness; "poor dear, she was not herself," was her only thought.

They discussed Emma and the approaching marriage. Gladys soon saw what was troubling her aunt in this matter, and sought to combat

the notion that Emma would wish to keep house; but it seemed to her aunt impossible that a wife should not wish to do so; marriage, without housekeeping, was in her eyes but a very poor thing.

In vain Gladys urged that she was sure she would be only too glad for Aunt Mary to do it all for her.

Aunt Mary only replied—

"Wait till you are married, my dear, then you will think differently; and recollect one thing, when you do keep house never give up your rights one inch; be as meek as you like to your husband in minor matters, but don't let him buy so much as the fish without first consulting you. The wine and beer are his prerogatives, but don't let him go outside of things to drink, beyond perhaps coals and wood, you need not put your foot down on these; the only disagreement I ever had with the poor dear collector was about purchasing the cheese—he was very tasty about cheese—and I should not have minded the cheese so much, but it is a short step from cheese to butter, and who knows what that might lead to?"

The vista thus opened out was so appalling,

that Gladys shrank from contemplating it, and her aunt remained mistress of the field of argument. The victory, however, was a defeat to her future administration of the cupboards; how to retain her hold over these was the real question.

By the time Emma arrived, she had almost worked herself into believing that she had better try and effect a compromise. What could she offer to give up? She thought she could bring herself to relinquish the ordering in of the meat, the poultry yard, and possibly the supervision of the baker. Surely these would content her, it could not be that the girl who seemed so amiable would tussle with her to the death for power over the whole larder and the storeroom; even she would hardly dare contest the linen closet. Poor Aunt Mary, she grew pale with fright at the prospect of Emma victorious over the outworks, driving her chariot, as it were, straight for the linen closet; and she felt that she could set her teeth and die for that shrine, as good men of old had perished in defending their faith and liberty.

Emma and Guss arrived.

Mrs. Tarleton threw care to the winds, and welcomed them with open arms.

Emma was charmed with her new surroundings; delighted in the parrots, who were all well and hearty; romped with the dogs and nursed the kittens; she and Gladys exceedingly enjoyed each other's society.

Guss at first felt a little awkward with Gladys. It was her colours he had worn and carried over many a stormy sea, cherishing and guarding them although he had no hope of ever being her own especial knight. During those long hours on board the "Irresolute," and the interminable days upon the voyage home—during those feverish nights, when indeed he had some hope of becoming at least her protector—those nights when he dreamt of vengeance on Seton, and of rescuing her from him; if any one had told him that in a few short weeks he would have found another woman, love for whom would have cast out his love for Gladys, he would have derided the prophet as prophets are derided in the days of their prophecying.

How had it all come about, he wondered; love is a strange thing. He had loved Gladys,

believed that his soul was linked with hers, believed that if he could not marry her, no other should be called his wife. Now there they were, Gladys and Emma—the old love was gone, and the new one ruled alone; his pulses beat for Emma not for Gladys any more.

He went into the garden, sat down under the old lime tree, and mused on the past. How had it all come about? He had not meant to propose that day at Greenwich, he had only meant to sound her, to see how the land lay; truly he did not repent, only why did he do it? Then, as he mused beneath the lime tree, Emma stood before him—and he ceased to wonder.

Taken from town to country, with the rattle and the din of London exchanged for the peace of the green fields, the never ceasing hum and whirl of life changed to a mellow sound of cattle lowing, birds singing, and sheep bleating; the monotony and dreariness of stucco, pavement, dust, and area railings replaced by the infinite beauty of the waving trees, the springing grasses and flowers of varied hue, the hills and woods, Emma, freed from the stuffiness of air overbreathed, now had regained her full health; she

had sucked in the thousand scented sweets that sail from meadows and from lea, from river banks and dells, from hill tops and cloud land, and she had thriven on such sustenance. For her the chorus of the songs of birds had been a medicine; better than all, her heart was full of joy, never before had she felt so happy, never looked so charming. Usually she had been a little too majestic in her beauty—tall and of full form she had appeared almost too queenly; now a softness had come into her face which rendered her more lovable; the majesty remained, but now she seemed a queen of love rather than a mere monarch of beauty; she had come down from her throne, and with all her royalty still clinging to her, surrendered her rule, and, by that very act, secured a kingdom.

Guss looked on her as she stood there, and he ceased to wonder; rather he wondered how he had been so fortunate as to secure this radiant woman. Under that very tree where Gladys had told him that he never could have his heart's desire, Guss now saw standing this woman who was his heart's desire, his pride, his happiness. The colour of the green trees and the yellow

light that broke through the lime tree boughs assorted well with her dark beauty. How had it all come about?—no difficulty in answering the question now.

Guss stood up; his height and breadth of shoulders, his manly form and honest face, made him a fit mate for the goddess who stood before him.

"Guss, I do love the country!"

"Emma, I do love you!"

* * * * * *

Mrs. Wren called, and made herself very agreeable to Emma; she carried her off to see her conservatory, her cottages, her schools, and the new fernery; she was glad to have an opportunity of repaying something of Mrs. Filters' kindness; that dreadful mistake she had made about that estimable woman had given her the greatest discomfort. Mrs. Filters had heaped coals of fire upon her head; now there was an opportunity of lifting off some of those burning cinders.

So she gave parties in Emma's honour; not heavy dinners, these she thought might be

irksome to one brought up as Emma had been, but luncheons and garden parties or pic-nics.

Emma enjoyed it all very much, and sent such accounts of Avonshire, and country doings, to her mother, that longing for country air and sylvan scenes Mrs. Filters went off for a week to Rosherville, with Mrs. Blesset for a companion. There she enjoyed herself much, finding it very rural and the shrimps perfection. She was, however, glad to return to town, and from the midst of her clean swept household gods, she wrote to Emma, saying, "that she must soon come back, as there was all the linen to get; the general trousseau to see to, and the time was short;" she concluded, "The young man at Tottencourt's tells me that veils are going out; but what a bride would be without a veil, I hardly like to think, he must be wrong; I've pinned myself to that house ever since your poor dear father took me there to choose our first linen, and it has worn beautiful; but I can't think of seeing you standing up with him in church without a veil, my dear, so I hope you won't go with such a fashion."

Gladys was feeling just a little down; she

had been engaged now for many months, and here were these two, only just come together, going to be married immediately. Seton did not even come to the "Quarries;" he was to have been there before this, and so completed the party; but at the last moment his heart failed him; he felt that he could not look on Westerham again at present; the thing was too recent; perhaps some day a time might come when he could regard with equanimity the rule of a stranger over the territory that he had hoped to govern.

He had heard from Bob Hustler, that the new-comer had made a new drive; enlarged the gardens, cut down the ten-acre piece round the dog kennels, and had made many other so-called improvements; and he had hated him for doing so. The place did not want improving in those respects; they were not improvements, they were injuries and desecrations. He himself would have done much to the Estate, and those things would indeed have been improvements; but this stranger to enlarge the gardens—why they were large enough for any country house; this new-comer to make a new drive, as if the old

one was not more convenient and picturesque; this interloper to cut down the dog-kennel piece; why, that was the very last piece that should have been destroyed, any other would not have been so wanton an aggression. Confound the fellow, he will cut down the lime walk next.

In this spirit he wrote to Gladys; he could not go to the "Quarries;" from its lawn he would see the trees and chimneys of his old home; she quite entered into his feelings on the subject, and joined in censuring the acts of the new lord; nevertheless, she felt sad that he could not join them, and some tinge of her feelings pervaded her letter.

Seton observed the tone of depression, and wrote back reminding her that very soon they would meet in London, as she was to be a bridesmaid to Emma; then they would settle their own affairs, and if possible arrange for a combined future.

After this last letter, Gladys became more hopeful, regained her usual buoyancy, and was even able to enjoy a very large party given by the new-comers. She did not know whether to

go or not at first; every one was going, but she thought Seton's feelings might be hurt, if she took her pleasure in the grounds of which he felt himself despoiled. She wrote, mentioning the coming party, and said that most certainly she should not go. Seton did feel very strongly on the subject, absurd such feelings might be, but there they were; he would not, however, on that account deprive Gladys of a pleasure, so he wrote at once, begging her to go, commissioning her to see how certain things were, and what had been done to others. So she went with a light heart, feeling she was performing a duty, and she permitted herself to be very much pleased with everything, always excepting the improvements.

As in the letter we have just referred to there was also mention made of the great eel and fish question, it may be suitable to mention here, that this important matter had been settled by a compromise; neither party were to give up any ultimate claim, but as a present arrangement, the miller and his friends were not to fish in the mill pond, but eels might be captured as heretofore in the traps that had been always used for that purpose.

Both sides were satisfied; the squire conceived that he had gained his point without going to law with his nearest neighbour; no line or net but his would now obtain in all his right of river; as to the eels, it would be next to impossible to prevent old Hustler trapping those, and this right was a very doubtful one.

The miller, with a wink, informed his friends "that the fishing in the pool wurn't nothing; there wurn't nothing there except it wur a pike or two, with their picket bones; the eels was the thing. Give me a good eel pie, that's what I likes, bless you, we takes um by the bushel zumtimes; squire may have the pike, and welcome, give me the eels."

The local authority was altogether triumphant, the arrangement was clearly come to on the basis of eels being eels, and fish, fish. The squire was to have the fish, the miller enjoy the eels.

Heartburnings were thus put a stop to; the Hustlers fattened on the eels, and they still eat of those dainty pies of which the miller spoke; there is also a rising generation of young Hustlers, children of Maria; who in all probability will in their turn produce a future progeny, who *shall eat of the* descendants of those eels, that

now, whether fish or not, swim in the waters that wash the shores of Westerham, or lump themselves into the miller's baskets.

This was a very grand fête at Westerham; the archery prizes were really almost too handsome as some people, who contemplated archery parties themselves, said; this remark was echoed by those who did not shoot successfully.

It was the first large thing they had given, and the new people were determined to do it well. They had come to Westerham from a distant county, and wished to create a good impression; they were rich, so everything was very superb indeed.

Emma and Gladys enjoyed it all very much; this was the last, and culminating gaiety of Emma's stay; she was to return to London on the next day but one, and have it out about the veil with the young man at Tottencourt's. Neither Gladys nor Emma contended at the targets; so, when the excitement there was at its height, they stole off together to the wood; then they performed the commission Seton had given Gladys. That young lady

showed Emma where Seton had built houses, where they had picked flowers together when they were children, also showed her where they had started on their great boat excursion ; lastly, in the lime walk, she pointed out their initials, cut by Seton, on one of the old trees.

They were away so long that Guss, guessing where to look for them, came in search of the truants, and together they returned to the gay crowd.

The band was playing, the last double end was finished, tea was going on round many outdoor fires, and in many little tents. When this gipsy meal was over, other amusements succeeded, till all was finished by a display of fireworks.

Every one said, "quite a delightful party, and the fireworks were superb." The luncheon in the great tent had been really too splendid.

"Down from Gunter's, I assure you."

"No, all sent from Avonside."

"Ah, I heard on very good authority that it all came from town."

Every one praised the fête, and every one went home declaring it was perfectly absurd to do things on such a scale, that the Lord Lieu-

tenant was not half so grand as these new people.

"I think she was a daughter of some one in business, you know."

"Ah, yes, I daresay in the city."

"No, in Manchester."

"Well, they are capital people, if they don't run out; but I would sooner see young Herold here myself. What has become of him?"

"I am sure I don't know."

"The second daughter is good looking, plenty of tin, I suppose; I think I shall go in for her; no son, is there?" said a young man.

"How over-dressed the girls were. I thought them perfect frights, didn't you, Lucy?" this from the young man's sister.

And a squire, who was quite heavy with the good things of the new-comers, declared that he really believed the man was a Radical.

The party from the "Quarries" neither sneered or found fault with either their hosts or the entertainment that had been provided for them, but went home across the fields delighted with their day, and enjoying the freshness of the evening air.

The following day was the last of Emma's visit, so Mrs. Tarleton determined to have a little earnest conversation with her, and sound her as to her ideas regarding housekeeping. After breakfast she got her opportunity, and opened in the direction of the momentous subject by saying—

"I hope you have enjoyed your visit, my dear? I am sure I shall be too happy to have you here always; I daresay Gladys will be running away soon now, and I shall be all alone, if you and Guss don't settle down here."

"I am sure nothing could be nicer, if you liked to have us; I have enjoyed being here so much. You have been so kind to me, indeed every one has been very good to me; I do so like the country."

"Then you think you could be happy here with Guss and his old mother, my dear?"

"I should have everything to make me so, and if you will trust me, I will see to the parrots, and the kittens, and everything."

"I would trust you with anything, my dear, but you will have plenty to do amusing yourself at first, and afterwards, I daresay, there will be something to nurse besides kittens. I don't want

you to be bothered with the pets and the household."

Emma grew very rosy, and declared "that she did not wish to lead a life of mere amusement; I can take a good deal of trouble off your hands, and I shall be pleased to do it. At home, my mother never would let me do anything, so I suppose I am not very clever at housekeeping, but I shall be so pleased to learn, to help you."

Here was a model daughter-in-law, but not after the model Aunt Mary thought most desirable. Could she be insinuating herself after this fashion for the very purpose of wresting from her the sacred keys; was this the glove over the iron hand; was this the thin end of the stick that was to drive her from power, and make her as her acquaintance who only knitted stockings. She seemed to see the jam pots quiver, and the very cupboards become unstable; was her conduct art, or was it simple nature?

Aunt Mary replied—

"My dear, I think your mother is one of the most sensible women I ever met with. I think she was quite right to keep house herself. It is a bad thing to give up the command of your own

household, even to a daughter; it has an ill appearance to see a mother looking like a cypher in her own house. What I wish to do is, to have Guss and yourself here to live with me; very likely you will want to be going about at times, but I should like the "Quarries" to be your home. I shall, when you are with me, be glad of your assistance in little matters, but, like your own mother, I do not wish you to undertake the very serious responsibilities of housekeeping yet; some day, I daresay, I shall be glad to give up everything to you, but"

"I hope that day will take a good many years coming, Mrs. Tarleton, for my sake, as well as yours, for I do so dislike the idea of housekeeping; of course, if you wished it, I would try to do my best, but it is such a relief to me that you don't want me to do it at all; I was really quite frightened at the idea of Guss and I in a house of our own, and me housekeeping."

Mrs. Tarleton sometimes felt just a little in awe of Emma's commanding beauty, but now she took her to her heart, and kissed her thoroughly. "My dear, we shall get on ex-

cellently. Remember from this time out I am your second mother."

Mrs. Tarleton felt as though a weight was lifted from her; nevertheless she wondered how it was possible not to love housekeeping.

CHAPTER XI.

"O HAPPY PAIR, O HAPPY FAIR."

It would be a work of supererogation to describe the great establishment known to the whole world as Tottencourt's. The belles of Clapham, Highgate, Hampstead, and other suburbs, both north and south, resort there at all times; but when their flirtings and coquettings, their lips and eyes, their voices or their figures, their graces or their talents, have vanquished some one of those moths who came to flutter, but remained to burn; when those halcyon days have come when they may rest from their labours, and gather in those spoils of conquest, the first fruits of their victory; then they seek the portals of that palace of dry goods, and pass hours of tranquil enjoyment in ransacking its treasures.

Surely it is worth while to be married, if only to sit before those counters selecting from those vast hoards whole heaps of goods, without having to think of your purse, so slenderly endowed by

your stingy father, without having any misgivings as to the bill. There can be but one culminating moment in a life, and surely that must be it, when before you are spread the treasures of all countries, the industries of every clime; linen and silk, satins, lace and embroideries, tissues, velvets and ribbons, fans, gloves, and an endless variety of things that the male mind is too feeble to grasp in all their details; before the conqueror are spread all these treasures, and in her heart she feels that she has won the right of selection from their piles by her prowess in the battle matrimonial.

Conceive the situation; there sits the conqueror, on her right is the parent who is to pay for these things now, on her left is the slave who is to pay hereafter; before her are the heaps of plunder; behind these heaps those who are so willing to be plundered smile and bow, praise with full effusion, or modify that praise if any hankering is shown for a still dearer article. With flattery on their tongues, politeness in their manner, and grimaces meant to be sympathetic with the situation, the shopmen do homage to the conqueror.

It is impossible for a time so supreme ever to recur; even if you ever again can afford to lavish money after this fashion, you have never again such requirements; at no other time of an ordinary life have you so many wants at once. Probably it is for this reason that such a time is so lingered over; possibly this accounts for the endurance the conqueror shows in sitting hour by hour reviewing the treasures of Tottencourt.

Oh, happy time, love on your left and money on your right, treasures of goods and gauds around you; time is forgotten.

Guss rather liked the shopping, it was a new world to him; the great establishment with department after department, feathers, flowers and bonnets, haberdashery in every form; glowing colours, bright hues, sheen of silk and gloss of satin; his queen enthroned amid it all; obsequious shopmen and smiling women; the latter in their trailing black silk dresses appearing to take as much interest as if they were to be bridesmaids; many of them would have made very reasonable brides themselves he thought. The men he would have liked to kick when they smirked and smiled, offering their opinions as to

the fashions, and what was ladylike and suitable to Miss Filters; "so very genteel and quite the *mode*, just your style, miss." Really it would have been a pleasure to marry that chap to the gunner's daughter; I should like to give him a taste of her embraces, thought Guss as he sat looking on; while the wretched young man appealed to him for confirmation of his views, he little thought the gent he so graciously included in the conversation was picturing to himself the effect a good ship's cat would have on his bared carcass.

While Guss and Emma were thus happily engaged, Seton was looking forward to seeing Gladys again; she and her aunt were coming to the wedding, they would be in London now immediately, for the great day was near. When they arrived a very important project was to be broached; Guss and Emma were going for their honeymoon to Paris, then, *via* Strasbourg, to the Rhine; Emma had said how nice it would have been if Gladys and Seton had been married and they all could have made a good long tour together. Ah, if it were only possible Seton had sighed. Then the subject had been much dis-

cussed; though Gladys and Seton could not be married in this off-hand way, yet there was no reason why they should not all make a tour together if only Mrs. Tarleton could be induced to go. So they looked forward to Aunt Mary's arrival, hoping to find she could be persuaded to enter into the project.

Besides Gladys there was to be only one other bridesmaid, Miss Creppell. This young lady had been a school friend of Emma, and there was a pact between them, that the first who married should claim the services of the other as a bridesmaid, so, as Miss Creppell had been worsted in the matrimonial race, she was bound to appear in the triumphal procession of her friend.

She was nothing loth, as she lived in a retired district in the neighbourhood of Bagshot; she remembered that one wedding is frequently the precursor of others, and in any case there was the costume, the looking over of the bride's things, a possible locket or bracelet from the groom, and a flirtation with the best man; also a week in London, for Mrs. Filters had sent her an invitation for that period.

Seton had to turn out, and he took shelter in the tenement of which Hann was still the ornament; she was very glad to see him and welcome him to Winchcom Street; she could hardly be brought to understand that it was not Seton who was going to marry Miss Filters, but that it was the raging lunatic who gave her a sovereign who was to be her husband. "And she comed here a nussing of him and hall! it is a queer game I don't think!" was Hann's commentary.

Mrs. Tarleton, Miss Creppell and Gladys all assembled; the wedding gifts came pouring in; Mrs. Wren sent a very handsome clock, Mrs. Sarncombe china ornaments, Mrs. Hodges a church service not bound for show; these were tributes for the kindness shown to Seton by the Filters family; Seton himself gave Emma a cross of brilliants that he ought not to have afforded. From her hoards Mrs. Tarleton produced a magnificent Indian necklace, and a shawl that would have made Tottencourt himself open wide his eyes, and some old point lace. "I don't give you household things, my dear," she told Emma, "because you are going to live with me; all I have will be yours, and I will take care that it all comes to you in good order."

Jack Blesset sent the earrings, and begged that Emma would not altogether forget him in the future; "the day-star of my life has set," he wrote, "but I trust she will be happier than I could have made her." Emma thanked him for his gift in a very pretty note, said she should always think of him as a cousin and a friend, and with regard to his rather involved metaphor, she hoped some other stars would make haste and get up so that he should not pine too much for the day-star, but choose a successor to replace the one that had set; her note, like those of young ladies in general, ended with a P.S., which read as follows—"Miss Creppell is very pretty, and has a good fortune."

The other presents consisted of the usual useless things that people persist in giving on such occasions; biscuit boxes, fish knives, worsted work, vases, inkstands, and the like.

The handsomest fish knife and fork came from John, who it will be recollected was a relation of the Filters', he sent also a teapot and a cream jug. This was very handsome of him, but embarrassing, for now it would be difficult not to invite him to the breakfast, and though Mrs. Filters was not ashamed to own him as a

relative, yet she considered that it was not the thing to set him down to table with Mrs. Wren, who was to be present, and Mrs. Tarleton, both of whom knew him well by sight, as they were patrons of the Piccadilly Hotel. John, however, showed the best possible feeling on the occasion; he quite understood the situation, and he took an opportunity of looking in and telling Mrs. Filters that he should have liked to see Emma married, but it was impossible he could get away; if she was agreeable he would look in in the evening, after it was all over, and have a quiet chat and a bit of supper with her, then he could be told how it all went off. Further, John undertook to see to many things about the breakfast, that he was peculiarly fitted to arrange.

The proposed Continental tour was now brought to Mrs. Tarleton's knowledge, and her acquiescence requested, but she declared that she could not leave home long enough for such a trip as they wished to make; what would the parrots do, and the cats and dogs? The young ones next tried to induce Mrs. Filters to be the chaperon, but she said she could not cross the water, even going to Rosherville had made her

feel it all up her back and that swimming she could hardly see! crossing the ocean was more than she was fit for; "'Owever Emma is going to do it I don't know, but there, a loving 'eart is a tower of strength."

This was a sad blow and a great derangement of plans that promised so fairly; the attacks were renewed, but Mrs. Tarleton was immoveable, she took her stand on the parrots, and erected the kittens into a barrier behind which she intrenched herself; it was simply impossible. The only thing now was to batter Mrs. Filters, which they all did with such effect, that at last that good-tempered woman gave way; the victory over her was accomplished more by the wistful face of Gladys, than the noisy arguments of the other conspirators.

It was all arranged; Gladys was to shelter under Mrs. Filters' wing, and they, escorted by Seton, were to meet Guss and Emma at Coblentz, the latter arriving there *viâ* Paris, Strasbourg, Baden, Heidelberg and Mainz; the former by way of Ostend and Cologne. Mrs. Tarleton would wait at the "Quarries," for the return of the wanderers.

The wedding day was a perfect specimen of weather; the bride and her two attendants looked lovely; Tottencourt's young man had been completely foiled in the matter of veils; a very beautiful specimen of Honiton lace flowed from the wreath that crowned Emma's wealth of hair.

Adopting the description of Hann, who had been an invited looker on, "she did look beautiful, and the other girls wasn't much behind, neither; there was that Miss Cripple, or whatever it is they calls her, and the girl that keeps company with our young gent. I always set him down for Mrs. Tarleton, which she is now. They was in white and blue, with boots and all to match. No, not the bride, stupid, every one knows they wears white. There was two clergy, and girls with flowers to toss down to tread on, and the organ and all. The breakfast was a sight; champagne and 'ock, and hother wines."

The third floor back and his friends who listened to this description, encouraged Hann to go on; so she gave them a very elaborate account of all the dresses, and the looks of the bride and bridegroom.

"How did you come to be at the breakfast—were you invited?"

"Which I was, leastways to look on; our young gent, says, says he, 'Hann, did you ever see a wedding?'

"'No sir,' says I, 'not as I know on.'

"'Would you like to?' says he.

"'Yes,' says I, 'more particular if it is my own.'

"He grinned, as he always do at my jokes, and said, 'Well, Hann, I daresay that won't be long first; just to show you 'ow the thing is done, would you like to go to Miss Filters' wedding to-morrow?'

"'Which I would,' says I.

"'Well, then,' says he, 'you can come if you like.'

"'Thank you for nothing,' says I, 'the church is hopen to all, rich and poor equal. I 'eard the parson say so; not that it's true, for they shoves us back where we can 'ardly see a bonnet.'

"'I mean,' says he, 'you can come and look on at the breakfast, and afterwards there will be a spread you can sit down to; Mrs. Filters told me I might invite you.' Then he give me a sovereign to buy a new bonnet."

"I up and thanks him, buys a bonnet, a real one-er, and hoff I goes to the wedding. Me and the other girls, and the young men who 'elped, had as good a spread as the company, wines and all; I didn't take much of the wines for fear of what might 'appen, for we don't 'ave fizzy every day at home; only on Sundays, and the first new moon, and hother festivals."

"I will be bound there were not much better looking one's than you there, Anne," said one of her listeners.

"If you think so, why don't you come forward and hoffer me your 'and and 'eart like a man no, no kissing, thank you, till you puts the ring on."

"Let Anne alone, she hasn't told us about the speeches yet; I say, Anne, do the speeches, there's a dear."

"What will missis say at my keeping bad company so long?"

"Bother missis, cut along, there's a brick you are a stunner at speeches."

"That is more than they was; first there was that old Blesset, who proposed the bride and groom; then came young Tarleton's speech,

'Ladies and gentlemen, and Mr. Blesset, it is with the greatest satisfaction I may say pleasure, that you at least I am here to-day; your kindness in drinking the 'ealth of Emma and of me will never be forgotten by both of us; not having been accustomed to being married, I 'ardly know 'ow to speak up proper, but I thanks you all wery much, and I will conclude with saying it will be the 'appiness of my life to love and cherish 'er who sits besides me; the gallant Nelsing said Hingland expecks every man to do his duty, and, by gum, I will do it by 'er.' It was a uncommon good speech, and every one rapped and knocked till the glasses 'opped and ringed like anythink.

"Then the parson made a long speech, as if he was in the pulpit, and some of 'em cried. After that our young gent proposed the 'ealth of the bridesmaids, and that Jack Blesset returned thanks.

"'The toast,' says he, 'of dear woman, as seen here to-day in its 'ighest form, 'as been drank 'eartily; what would this world be without woman, and what this room without those lovely

bridesmaids, who adorn it with their presents? It is not in my prog-rim to speak of the bride herself, but I must say that she forms the centre of the beautifullest bookay I ever set eyes on; we know, ladies and gents, that one of the fair bridesmaids is bespoke to my friend, if he will allow me to call him so, Mr. 'Erold; of the other I only take leave to say that whoever she takes to will be as 'appy a man as hever the sun shined on. Ladies and gents, here's to all your very good 'ealths, and thanks on account of the bridesmaids who grace us with their presents, and overpower us with their beauty.' He didn't do it bad, did he? stuck it on pretty thick."

"That is exactly what he said, is it, Anne?"

"Yes, exact, as near as I can recolleck. He is a rare one for fun, he is; he come and took the chair when we was 'aving our victuals, and he wanted me to drink more wine; but, says I, 'oh, dear no, not for Jo, nor Hann neither;' then he wanted to kiss us all round, and said, 'it was the fashion at wedding breakfastes.'"

"You didn't let him, I hope, Anne."

"Just a few; he is a very nice young man."

"Oh, dash it. I say, Anne, you are our

property, you know; you shouldn't go letting other fellows poach."

"Your property, indeed! why there isn't one of the lot has the spirit to come forward, and offer fair; I am ashamed of you, you are a poor set. Your property! well, you medicals have cheek. Good morning gents, your property is going; don't cry."

Hann swept a stage courtesy, and departed, thus terminating her account of the wedding.

There is very little to add to the account given by Hann; excepting in such minor matters as words and phrases, she was tolerably accurate. It all went off very well, the bridesmaids were charming in their blue and white dresses, the bride transcendant in her veil; the breakfast, with its speeches, was not more tedious than such breakfasts usually are. Jack Blesset kept things going, as he informed Miss Creppell, to whom he made himself particularly agreeable; so much so, that quite a substantial foundation was laid for the marriage, which turned out to be a great success, a structure that probably will be very enduring, as both he and his wife are still young and in very robust health.

Mrs. Tarleton had some conversation with Seton on money matters, and it was settled that he and Gladys should venture on matrimony after the return of the party from abroad. For the present Gladys returned to the "Quarries" to make preparations for her foreign tour.

As the days went on, Mrs. Filters became so anxious to see Emma again, that she did not regret her determination to meet her and Guss at Coblentz; she would have crossed the Atlantic rather than not go to her as soon as she got the chance; still she thought it advisable to make every possible preparation, and take every precaution against sea sickness, of which she had the greatest dread. She bought bottles of sovereign remedies; she purchased a belt which could either be used for applying ice to her spine, or filled with air would act as a life preserver in case of wreck, or could be utilized as an air cushion by day, and a pillow by night.

Provided with these comforts, she regarded the voyage with less dread, and with a mind relieved, she procured those necessaries of travel she had been recommended to take with her by different friends who had heard they were absolute requirements.

She laid in such things as soap, there being but little on the Continent; candles, to save ordering them at the hotels where they charged a franc apiece for such luxuries; tea; patent medicines; guide books; an instrument to fasten doors; pneumatic pegs to hang up dresses on; a hand glass, in case there were no looking glasses; and a portmanteau that could only be unlocked by arranging certain letters into a particular word, an invention that caused much amusement and considerable trouble at the Custom-houses; this concluded her list of essentials.

Then there was much thought and consultation with a young lady at Tottencourt's on the subject of suitable garments. These, under the young lady's advice, became so numerous that a basket box had to be taken in addition to the lettered portmanteau, the bag, dressing bag, and bonnet box.

At last all was ready, and the day of starting was at hand. Gladys was about to leave the "Quarries" to join Mrs. Filters and Seton, when everything was disarranged by Seton receiving a letter.

CHAPTER XII.

FROM GAY TO GRAVE.

THE letter that so deranged the plans of the tourists was black-edged, and from Mrs. Warrington; it was very brief, and ran thus:—

"MY DEAR SETON,—

"Your poor uncle died last night, and I have no time to say more than that the funeral will take place next Thursday. I have written to your sisters to inform them of the melancholy fact. Your uncle died quite calmly, and spoke of you at the last. Believe me, my dear Seton, to be very affectionately yours,

"ELIZA WARRINGTON."

All, then, was over with the old colonel; "poor old fellow," thought Seton, "I had no idea he would go off so quickly, though doubtless there was a wonderful change in him; I wonder how it will all be, now that he is gone?"

Next day Seton received a note from Wren,

saying he should pass through town on his way to Creamington, so he would look in on him, and they could go on together.

This plan was carried out. Wren and Seton arrived together at the hotel in Creamington on the Wednesday; there they found Sarncombe. Next morning Hodges arrived just in time for the ceremonial.

It seemed very sad to Seton to find the house just as it had always been; to see the spotless lawn, the trimmed shrubs, the Wellingtonias, the bright steps, the polished furniture, all unchanged; only the owner was gone; just his body was still there upstairs in the coffin, but the master who had till recently predominated so strongly, was departed for ever—only a screwed down coffin now represented him there.

The deceased had so managed matters that he had left behind him much property, but none to love his memory. Seton, perhaps, did so more than any other, but even with him it was but a faint feeling—his sorrow was caused more at the idea of death having taken the old man, than by hearty affection. It was impossible to him not to remember that his uncle had never helped him

when he was in sore straits, that he had never spared from those hoards now so useless to him that which would have comforted him and ameliorated the ills he had chanced upon; he could but remember that his uncle had groaned, even wept, but had never acted as if those groans and tears were for his misfortunes.

Now, perhaps, he had left him a fortune, but Westerham was gone; it would be impossible to recover the family estate now.

No, Seton was sorry and mourned for his uncle, but not as one who loved the deceased; he had been willing, even had wished, to love him, but he had received no encouragement to do so; if his uncle had only sympathized with him in his troubles, he would have been drawn towards him, but the old man had merely grumbled, and his groans and tears were simply because he himself felt annoyance.

They all assembled in the drawing room—Eliza did not appear. Everything was conducted with the greatest propriety; the hatbands, gloves and scarfs were the best that could be procured; the first undertaker in the town had prepared everything suitable to the station of the deceased.

The coffin was borne downstairs, and the procession started.

"Earth to earth, dust to dust."

Then the *cortége* returned; the man was dead and buried.

Who was to inherit those riches that he had so prized and hoarded? Who would have all that gold which had been reft from him in a moment—all those accumulations that he would not lessen to save his nearest relative from homelessness or poverty?

The breath was gone, the life was over, the body was buried; still one act of the dead man had yet to be revealed. Once more his word would be law—his written word was still powerful, although he was gone to account for the use he had made of his money, time, and knowledge. Once more his will would make itself felt—once more his word was powerful for good or ill.

When the chief mourners returned, they found Mrs. Warrington in the drawing room. She received Seton with a warm shake of the hand, the others with a stiff lowering of the head.

Wine and cake were on the table.

A few desultory words were uttered, then the man servant opened wide the folding doors that

separated the drawing room from the dining room. At the table of the dining room was seated a gentleman who proved to be the lawyer. The doctor had returned with the other mourners, and he still remained.

Mrs. Warrington, addressing herself to the solicitor, said—

"I think, Mr. Naylor, you had better read the will."

Mr. Naylor bowed, and did so. It was very short; there were no bequests, except one of one hundred pounds to Seton; then there followed a description of his stocks, bonds, shares, and house property—his moneys on mortgage, and in the Government Securities. All was left, without any reservation, to his wife!

Every eye was turned on her as she sat in her flowing robes and her widow's cap; she was quite unmoved, and remained motionless.

Hodges, who had grown red with excitement, leant forward and said—

"Is that all, sir?"

"I have read everything."

"Do you mean that my wife's name is not even mentioned?"

"There is nothing but what I have read."

"This is infamous; I don't know what you think, Mr. Wren, or the others, but I shall not allow this will to pass unchallenged. Why, the colonel was so fond of Dora, that he asked her here; she was the only one of the family, except Seton, he did ask; she was his guest here, when this woman was his servant; Herold, surely you won't allow that woman to triumph in her wickedness!"

Seton replied, "I am sure of one thing—this is neither the time nor place to discuss such matters; and your language is most improper."

"I will not hold my tongue in season, or out of season, when unrighteousness is before me; with such strength as the Lord has endowed me, I will denounce the evil doer, unmask the author of this villainy"

Sarncombe and Wren both speaking at once, said—

"Shut up, do."

"For goodness sake, Hodges, keep quiet."

But the man seemed beside himself; he raised his voice and thundered out—

"I will not keep silence; why should my wife

and my babes be wronged like this? Why should that woman sit there—there, where she has thrust herself; how I know not. By what arts and wiles she induced that poor old man to marry her—by what devices or what pressure on his enfeebled intellect she has contrived to get his signature to that document they call a will, I know not. Doctor, you must know he was unfit to make a will. Mr. Naylor, who drew it?"

Eliza had risen, and when Hodge's voice failed him for a moment, she said—

"I think it is time I left this room; although I am in my own house it seems that I am to be subjected to language such as I never expected to hear from the mouth of a minister, and such as I certainly shall not remain to listen to. Mr. Naylor, you have my instructions to give every information sought for about the will; and Doctor, you will oblige me very much if you will kindly answer any questions these gentlemen may think fit to put to you, as to the colonel's capacity." She swept a courtesy to the whole party; Sarncombe opened the door, and Eliza, after pausing for a moment, during which time she pressed her left hand to her side, passed out.

Then followed a scene in which Hodges behaved so badly that every one refused to hold further communication with him, except Seton to whom he seemed to cling as a last hope.

Seton induced him to leave the house; then in the road he turned and said imploringly—

"Surely, surely you won't allow this iniquity! you know how fond he was of Dora—she and you were his favourites—the only ones he ever invited here; he gave her such a handsome present, too, and all; surely you won't allow this will to stand?"

Seton did what he could to calm him, promised to look into the matter, to see to the thing thoroughly, and write to him fully on the subject. In the end, he induced him to return at once and consult with his brother James. At last he got rid of him—saw him enter the train, and the train move off. His last words were—

"I will see my brother James, and if there is any justice in all England, my innocent babes shall not be defrauded by that woman."

The man seemed absolutely insane.

With a deep sigh of relief Seton returned to the hotel, and there held consultation with Wren

and Sarncombe. It appeared that the will was dated some five months before the decease; Mr. Naylor had drawn it in accordance with the colonel's own instructions, the testator's intellect was quite clear, he remembered where all his moneys were, and insisted on the different securities being enumerated in the will; the will was duly executed and properly witnessed. "In short, it is as good a will as was ever made," was Mr. Naylor's assertion.

The doctor was reticent; he merely replied to Mr. Wren that he knew nothing about the will; as to the colonel's capability, he was not different to other men of his age; if the clergyman just left were as competent as the colonel, he was much mistaken.

What was to be done? The value of the property was very considerable, Mr. Naylor had said it was certainly over a hundred thousand pounds, and in all probability it was nearly double that amount.

"Fancy that woman getting it all! I wish to goodness he had left it to you, Seton," said Wren; "I always thought you, at any rate, would have had a share."

"By George," said Sarncombe, "she is a knowing card; I wonder what she will do with it? for I don't see that we can do anything."

Seton declared he would not go to law again on any consideration, he had had enough of that to last him his life.

Wren agreed that there was nothing to go on; so the conference broke up, it being pretty nearly settled that things should be allowed to take their course. They would wait and watch, but it was very unlikely anything would turn up to assist them to upset the will; it seemed queer, and it certainly was unjust, but these things happened every day.

Wren and Seton went back to London together.

"What will you do now, Seton?" said Wren, just before they parted; "I should think we could manage to get you something or other, you can't remain idle; hadn't you better eat your terms and get called to the Bar, I don't know what else you can do; once a barrister there are many things we might get you into." Seton told him of the proposed foreign tour, and that Mrs. Tarleton intended doing something to assist him.

to marry and settle down, perhaps abroad; it might be cheaper.

Wren did not approve of living out of England, and still stuck to the plan he had proposed; but Seton said he did not feel fit for it, at any rate at present, he thought a trip abroad would be the best thing for him. "I haven't been right, you know, ever since my illness."

"You do not look strong, I daresay a change will set you up; don't be too much cut up about this business. When you come back from abroad come down and stay, Elinor says you are quite a stranger. I will look out and see if we can't find something in the county to stick you into; good-bye, and let us hear what you think of the people and things in foreign parts. I never was abroad myself, I have so much to do at home I can never find time to do more than go to the seaside for a few days and get a blow; good-bye."

Winchcom Street was looking as dusty and stuffy as ever; Seton had not thought it worth while to change back to Remington Place again, as they were all going abroad so soon. So Winchcom Street was the home to which he returned after parting from Wren. It seemed

strange to sit down in the old chair in which he had passed so much time when the law suit was in progress, and remember that it was all over; that his uncle was gone, and as far as he was concerned his property was buried with him; he had built on a weak foundation, and the whole edifice of hope had crumbled into dust.

There was no doubt his uncle had led him to expect a share of his property, he had treated him as one very dear to him, expressed much tenderness for him in speech, and had been affected at his losses and reverses. From the nature of the man it was not extraordinary that he should be miserly in life, but why he should in death have still withheld from his only male relative, one who he professed to hold dear, all portions of that fortune to which he had clung with such tenacity in life seemed to Seton wholly inexplicable. He had built on the sand and his house was fallen on a morass; and it had sunk. He had placed his freight of hope on a ship of fair appearance, not knowing that the timbers were rotten and the seams open; and the ship had foundered.

The fortune had gone from him and from

the family as surely as if indeed it had been sent upon the ocean and gone down beneath the cold blue waves.

False had been the ring of the woman's voice, false were her declarations. "Leave it to me, I will watch over your interests as if they were my own," she had said, and this was the result. Of course she had influenced him, it was too monstrous a supposition that even the colonel could without pressure have done such a thing, leave all his fortune to a woman lately his servant, who, although in name a wife, was in reality only a nurse. Why, he could have provided for her beyond even the usual dreams of avarice of such women, and yet left fortunes to his relatives. "Queer woman, I thought her," and Seton laughed, "queer is hardly the right name, I think. What in the world will she do with it all? she will find it difficult to spend the interest of such a sum; she is still very good looking, and can't be much over thirty I should think; she is sure to marry. She has turned her print dresses and flat caps to good account; I should think it was better than being a nursery governess. Thank goodness, at any rate I am free. I

have nothing to wait for any longer, no more left off clothes to sneak after; I am sick of watching and waiting; the law suit nearly killed me; years of thinking how this property would be left, would have quite worn me out; I now, at any rate, know everything."

Then he remembered how his ambition had been crushed, that he was left with no profession, and that he must accept such aid as Wren had proffered, or become a mere annuitant with no aim or object left in life. Gladys was his only comfort, the one hope still left to him; he would be able to fold his arms around her and rest tranquil till that little space called life was over. It would be very sweet to be always with her, her smile would brighten the gloomiest hour, her laugh would make the summer days more bright, her love would compass him as with a glory only a little less than that which he might gain hereafter.

But still, but still . . . he was over young to sit down, to fold his arms and rest; had he a right to do so; was he to sit content and live on smiles and love while others worked? great, immensely great; was the prize that he had gained,

but did he deserve to take the prize? If indeed he could see his way to pay back to others some of the good that would be granted him; if, as he had intended, he could pass his wedded life in planning and executing schemes for the amelioration of the lot of others, then he might honestly have enjoyed the love and laughter; then he would have had a right to be gayest of the gay, for he would have felt that he had earned this right by work, had earned enjoyment in his leisure hours by doing his duty in the world.

But now . . . now, he could not do anything concerning those plans; he could not even fall into the rank of workers at all, there seemed no path open to him but just to be pushed, as Wren had suggested, into something in the county.

He took from his desk Ralph's last letter, and read it with tears springing to his eyes, as he came across the loving expressions it contained; he read on to where Ralph had written—"I have dreamt of fame, but I shall die unknown, I have longed for what the world calls immortality, but I shall know no immortality other than that which I sometimes see opening out before me I sit at evening on the hill top."

Thus his friend had written of himself; Seton's aspirations had been less exalted, he had not wished to strive for fame, he had only wanted to do his duty in that state of life in which he had been placed. In this case, it was not he who had failed, it was his state of life which had left him. He had been brought up as the heir to a good estate; no profession had been deemed necessary for him; he himself had not wished for one, he had believed he could be more useful in that position to which he had been born. Now the position was gone, and he had no work to do, no occupation for his time.

Twenty years hence he might be content in the love of Gladys, and able to employ himself in such little matters as an idle man whose fortune is a bare subsistence may take upon himself.

Ralph had written, "When sympathy is gone, then I believe life may become a burden rather than a blessing; but till then we cannot cease to care about the things of this world." Seton felt that he had full sympathies; he loved his fellow creatures, and longed to benefit them. "Without sympathy, life may become a burden," his friend had written; but

how, if with all sympathy, you are unable to put it into action, although desirous to do so with a hungry wish; might not life in this case, too, become a burden?

He turned to Ralph's legend of the Capo delle Croce, and he thought how fair had been his prospects; how his bark had sailed out into a summer sea, and storms had arisen; how his stream had flowed fairly, and that for him the air had been bright and warm; but the cold winds had arisen, and had prevailed—

> "The air is warm, and is bright
> The sea with ripples is gay,
> But storms will arise in their might
> Driving beauty and gladness away."

Ay, it was so, and it ever will be so to those who put their trust in earthly things; as with Ralph, a time will surely come when all these things will be as nothing; even if fame has been achieved, a breath may blight it; no fortune is secure, no fame is certain, no happiness is sure. Storms will arise in their might, which we are powerless to guard against. All we can do is to bravely face these storms, to show endurance under them, and prepare for that time when fame will be a vain word, and only faith and love avail.

Had he not still left to him the greatest blessing that can ever fall to the lot of man—the love of a woman? the entire love of God's fairest work, a woman?—a woman, beautiful as an inspiration; had he not Gladys?

Away, then, with these dismal dreams, these inane imaginings; with love to help him, he would be strong; something would be found for him to do, some work which he might accomplish. He need not fold his arms and be a mere on-looker; he would find some work to do which would sweeten his existence, and be as salt to the system, or as water in a desert land.

CHAPTER XIII.

SOMETHING ABOUT SELFISHNESS.

NEXT day when Seton came in to dinner, he found lying on his table a letter from Mrs. Warrington. "What in the world is she writing to me for, I wonder?" thought he as he sawed open the envelope with a paper knife; then he read—

"MY DEAR SETON,—

"I was so sorry to find you had left Creamington; I surely thought you would have remained to see me, as it cannot be called seeing me just being present at the reading of the will, when Mr. Hodges behaved so badly; what a dreadful man he is, or was he intoxicated? I think the Bishop ought to take away his gown, I do indeed. I must thank you for speaking as you did, and I must say Captain Sarncombe and Mr. Wren behaved like gentlemen, though they did ask Mr. Naylor all sorts of questions; I don't say it was unnatural of

them, for of course we all like a bit of money, and there is no doubt that your poor dear uncle left more than a bit. I should not advise any of them to try going to law, as nothing can be more certain than that the colonel was as fit to make a will as any one ever was in their lives. Now, Seton, I want to impress on you not to have anything to do with it, if they are so foolish as to try it on. If they like, let them; but don't you join in it. Law, as you know, has a hard tooth, don't you try its edge again. You may think that I say this to put you off, but that is not my reason; I defy any one to upset the will; no better was ever made, and that they will find if any of them try to upset it. Mind you take my advice, and if you can't come and see me before you go abroad, as you wrote you were going to, be sure and come here directly you come back. Remember what I have all along told you, and believe me to be very affectionately yours,

"ELIZA WARRINGTON."

* * * * * *

What was the meaning of all this? What in

the world was Eliza driving at?" Hann came and went, and was almost indignant with Seton, because he did not eat more chicken; "as nice and brown as hever it could be, and gravy made a purpose. Missis is very good about the bones, and boils them down careful;" she soliloquized, as she dipped her finger in the dish, and tasted that which she had been praising her mistress for making so carefully.

Chicken had little allurement for Seton, and rice pudding none; the letter occupied him so entirely.

"A queer woman, and an uncommonly sharp woman; but has she not over-reached herself in writing like this to me; evidently she is afraid of a law suit, and wishes to keep me out of it; I suppose I am the one to protest against the will, if anybody, so she seeks to disarm me by a sort of intimation that it is my interest to keep in with her I don't know though the others are as nearly related as I am, and I am sure she need not have been afraid of my going to law again; whatever happens, that I don't do; once in a life is enough of that sort of thing.

"Why the goodness does she palaver me now? Clearly she did it before to keep me quiet, and prevent my getting at my uncle; but now, I can't understand her object; some people, I suppose, would co-too to her, and try what they could get by so doing, but I won't; nothing shall induce me to have anything to do with her more; she is a designing creature, who first got the old man to marry her, then kept him under her thumb, and made him execute such a will as she thought fit.

"How to goodness she managed to subdue him, as she did, I can't imagine. Rarey is nothing to her.

"Her idea, evidently, is to get me to keep quiet; she reckons that if I do not take action, the others will hardly like to do so; that things will slip along, and she will be left in the enjoyment of the fortune. What will she do with it? Most likely marry some fellow, who will spend the money, and then ill-use her; that will be about the end of it, I daresay."

"Here, Anne, bring me some cheese, I haven't made half a dinner."

"Which you 'aven't, Mr. 'Erold; shall I run

out and get a bunch of creases? there's lovely ones at the corner shop."

Seton accepted the friendly offer, eat his cheese, and enjoyed the watercress. Afterwards he sat down and wrote a reply to Eliza. In his letter he guarded himself against giving any opinion, or in any way tying himself down, but he did express abhorence of the law; his letter was polite, but hardly cordial; he could not bring himself to write words, the reverse of those which would have expressed his feelings; the letter was cold but it was perfectly civil.

The letter finished and posted, he felt that he had washed his hands of the whole Warrington question.

Hodges arrived in Town on purpose to see Seton about the will; he had consulted his brother James, and that astute gentleman had advised him to have nothing to do with the affair himself; but if possible, to persuade Seton to take up the matter; if Seton did so, and gained the day, the sisters would share with him; if the Court decided for the will, he alone would have to bear the cost.

On this advice Hodges acted; he told Seton

that it appeared it would be best if the opposition to the will came from him, as he was the nearest male relative.

Seton replied, "that they all would benefit equally if the will was upset."

Then Hodges shifted his ground; declared that as a minister of religion he did not consider it fit that he should descend into the arena and fight for lucre—

"You," he continued, "are the representative of the whole Herold family, you are in a measure skilled in legal matters, having had experience in them; you have no occupation, surely it is right and fit that you should take action in defence of your own sisters; even if you are so foolish as to disregard your own interests, you should not allow that woman to triumph."

"I have had experience, and nothing you could say would induce me to resume such experiences."

"Then you will not move in the matter?"

"Most decidedly I will not."

"You will leave her to flaunt before the world, robed in your uncle's spoils; you will allow her to fatten on the property that should have been yours, and that of your sisters; do you mean

that you will abdicate your duties, abandon your own flesh and blood, and leave that creature to scatter to the winds the fortune that your uncle so carefully amassed?"

"I don't mean to do anything about it, and I would not advise you or any one else to burn your fingers by trying to pull dead ashes from a burning fire. There is no reason why I should act for the others, they are as much interested as I am, and can put the law in motion quite as well as I can."

"Herold, the path of duty is plain before you and you will not see it; it is true, as you say, that others could legally act; but surely you will own that you are your father's representative, and that had he been alive he would have been the proper person to do this thing?"

"I am very sure that if my father was alive he would not move in the matter, and I am equally sure that I won't; what is there to stop your doing it, if you wish it done?"

"I have told you already my office prevents me, and my high calling will not permit me to strive in the courts for worldly gear. I have other duties to perform, for which I am fitted—for this thing I am unfitted."

"Nonsense, Hodges, you won't have to strive in the courts, as you call it. Go over and set Gosling at them, or let your brother James tackle them; you need have nothing to do with it, except . . . just the bother, and . . . the paying the bill when you are beaten."

"I little thought you would treat this matter so lightly, or that you would so easily and with open eyes desert the path of duty. I wonder you are not ashamed to try and thrust on me a business incompatable with my calling; I am astonished that you should so little regard the ties of nature as to leave your sisters, your own flesh and blood, without that natural assistance that you could render in a matter which so deeply affects their interests. Herold, I am disappointed in you; I had believed that in you were the germs of better things which would bud into a fruit, the excellence of which would be as a blessing to your relatives. I fear that you are eaten up with selfishness, the most baneful of all bad fruits. Selfishness is as a canker at the core, and be well assured that if you do not cast from you this apple of the Dead Sea, you will become corrupt all over, a thing of bitterness to yourself

and an outcast from all who now hold you dear. I trust you will take my words in good part, I speak them for your benefit. Selfishness is the fruitful mother of a numerous offspring, each one of which is a crime either moral or social. Your neglect of duty would be most unwarrantable even if it proceeded from mere laziness; emanating as it does from selfishness, it is little short of an actual sin. I say it advisedly, for it is a sin to neglect our duties, a crime to allow unrighteousness to prevail—that woman is a very type and symbol of unrighteousness."

"Come, Hodges, that is quite enough; you want to make a cats-paw of me and I won't have it, so you are angry. I forgive the preaching, but I have had quite enough of it. The whole affair is most disastrous to me, as to Dora and all of us, I suppose; but we had better leave it alone, there is no good raking about black mud, and certainly none in bespattering one another. Have some lunch?"

Hodges, finding Seton was not to be moved either by preaching or protesting, took some lunch, renewed his acquaintance with the dinner sherry, and finally retired, discomfited and dis-

gusted, to take further counsel with his brother James.

"What a game he is," said Hann to her mistress, "the hepleptics as carry a bit of soap under their tongues ain't nothing to him."

"Lack a day," said her mistress, "a white choker may hide the neck, but it don't keep hid the sperrit."

Hann coincided with this view of the question, and after considering whether she should entertain her mistress with her new sketch of Hodges or not, she decided to wait till evening, when she would have a wider audience.

It may be admissible here to state that Hodges did not institute any legal opposition to the will; James wrote to the doctor, but that gentleman merely replied that he was unable to furnish Mr. James Hodges with any information connected with the late Colonel Warrington other than that which he had already given to Mr. Wren.

The story that gained ground in the neighbourhood of Slumpton-in-Squash was to the effect that Dora had been the pet and delight of her old uncle, who had died worth half a million, the bulk of which he had wished to leave to her,

but growing a little twichild in his old age, a will had been prepared which gave all Dora's money to a woman who passed as the Colonel's wife, and who had by threats got the poor old man to sign it. None of the family would help to recover Dora's rights, especially her brother had behaved very badly, absolutely refusing to get her back the money, though he could easily have done so had he chosen. Mr. Hodges, rather than plunge the whole family into hot water, had foregone his wife's claims, feeling it was better to be content with a little, than cause family dissension.

* * * * * *

The foreign tour was now again taken up; Mrs. Filters felt sure that Seton wanted change very badly.

"He looks droopy," she observed to Mrs. Blesset, "change of air is the thing, but I do 'ope there won't be too much of it when we cross over."

Letters had come from Emma and from Guss; bright pleasant letters, telling by their tone as much as by the actual wording that these two

had chosen wisely, that they were well assorted to each other. Very wisely they had gone for these first days of married life to a place where there was much to see and do, rather than to a solitude which however delightful in theory, in practice almost invariably becomes just a little irksome; newly-married people usually lack those objects of common interest which make their lives so happy when they are attained.

In the letters were hopes and pressing wishes that the arrangement made before the wedding should hold good. The death of Colonel Warrington need not derange the plans beyond hindering the departure of the home division for a few days; Guss and Emma would delay their arrival at Coblentz by passing extra time at Baden.

All was therefore re-arranged; Gladys arrived in Remington Place; and next day the three travellers started for Ostend. Mrs. Filters already spoke of that town as Osteng.

Next day has been written, partly because that day succeeded the one of Glady's arrival, and partly because the day of departure took place on the morrow of an interview which we are now

about to record. It was not an event of much importance, but as it dismisses from our pages a person who thought himself and his knowledge of much influence as regards the fortunes of Seton, we must find a corner in which Mr. Weltenbury may make his farewell bow.

On the day in question, Hann entered Seton's room, and informed him "that if he was at 'ome a man who giv' the name of Weltingbury would like to see him."

Mr. Weltenbury was shown in from the adjoining passage.

"Good morning, Mr. Weltenbury; what brings you here, what can I do for you?"

"I have come, Mr. Herold, because you did not send for me."

"That is an odd reason, isn't it?"

"No, sir, I don't think it is, if I may make so bold as to say it; I don't think it is an odd reason at all, sir. I waited patiently, expecting every day to get some message from you; as I didn't get any, I took the liberty of coming to see you."

"What in the world did you expect to hear from me about?"

"About, Mr. Herold? well, as far as I know there is only one affair between you and me, sir."

"As far as I know there is not even one."

"If you will allow yourself to think, Mr. Herold, you will surely recollect that on a former occasion I called on you about a certain matter."

"Quite so, Mr. Weltenbury; you mean regarding my late uncle, Colonel Warrington?"

"I do mean regarding the late colonel, sir."

"I don't know what more you can have to say in that matter. You then received from me a five-pound note for telling me that he would most likely leave his fortune to Mrs. Warrington, so, in one sense, you earned that five-pound note."

"Yes, sir, certainly, sir; and at that same time there was talk of a fifty pounds, sir; that is what I come about. The colonel died pretty plum, I believe, sir?"

"Colonel Warrington died very rich; but I hardly see how any talk, as you call it, about fifty pounds gives you an errand here."

"Well, sir, you are a gentleman, ain't you?"

"I hope so; but my answer in some measure depends on your definition of a gentleman."

"A gentleman is one as keeps his word, and lets it stand as good as writing; isn't he, sir?"

"Quite so, Mr. Weltenbury; now do tell me what you are driving at, and what you have come here for."

"I am driving at what you promised me when you were living at Remington Place."

"And what did I promise you?"

"You promised that when the colonel was brushed off, there would be a fifty pound note coming my way; isn't that so, sir?"

"No, I never promised anything of the sort; I believe you said something about fifty pounds, but I am quite sure I never promised you fifty pounds, or anything else, at my uncle's death; why should I?"

"I am took aback, sir; a gentleman like you; and I put you on the road and all; to quibble about such a thing for a paltry fifty; I wouldn't have believed it, to want to ride off on whether you said the words, or I did; why, if it was me to start the idea, you agreed to it."

"I never did anything of the sort; if my uncle had left me his fortune, I might have done something; as it is"

"You don't mean to say you haven't got it?"

"I was left one hundred pounds; so you see I should only have half a fortune if I gave you fifty."

"Good Lord! and who has got it, then? I heard you was the heir."

"You heard wrong, then, Mr. Weltenbury; so far from it, I tell you that all I was left was one hundred pounds; Mrs. Warrington gets the remainder."

"Well, I am ——; you don't mean to say that —— gets it all? Can't you put the lawyers at her?—depend on it she did not get it on the square. Don't you sit down and let her have it. I told you she was after it; why didn't you stop it? Didn't I tell you that she sat on him?"

"It is no good, Mr. Weltenbury; the money is gone, and I am afraid your chance of a fifty is gone too; now I must ask you to leave me, as I am very busy packing up."

"Don't go away, sir; don't give it up; never mind my disappointment, I would lose the fifty twice over to see that woman kicked out. I never had my feelings so hurt in all my life as they was by that —— well, woman if you wish it, sir; think it over, sir, do; *and if you* want me I shall be at the old place."

Mr. Weltenbury left Winchom Street revolving Mrs. Warrington's conduct in his mind, and blaming her severely. "To think of that woman; why, if she had only squared it with me, what a time I should be having now. I wonder how she managed it? Why couldn't she square it with me, she must have squared some one; that doctor, I expect, most likely she will marry him. I never did have any luck; d——n the woman."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BRIDE OF THE RHINE.

COBLENTZ is ever a bright cheerful town; its streets are full of busy people, of soldiers, townsmen, and tourists. The broad Rhine flows along one face of it, beyond tower up the heights of Ehrenbreitstein. It is far too well known to need description; to most readers it is as stale as Brighton; but, as with them, there was once a time when to sit at the windows of the hotels that look upon the Rhine and gaze at the ever varying mob that throngs the bridge, the crowded steamers that ring their bells as they arrive or depart, was a new delight; so was it now with Guss and Emma, with Seton and Gladys, and with Mrs. Filters.

Our tourists were all assembled. Owing to the delay in starting of the English contingent, Guss and Emma had had ample time to explore the beauties of the upper portion of the Rhine; they had been able to loiter and enjoy; they had not *found the ruins* stale, or the loitering unprofitable.

To these two the glories of Rheinfels, the picturesqueness of the Cat and Mouse, the legends of the Loreley, and of Liebenstein, were all quite fresh; they enjoyed them none the less because they have been sung and sneered at, over-praised and over-joked about, till their very names have become a weariness. To them they were all new; for them the glory and the freshness yet remained; natural beauties are to natural people ever unimpaired, nor praise nor sneers can spoil them. Man may praise, or may despise, but each new spring will ever clothe afresh the woods and vineyards, each autumn will crown with a new glory the forest and the cliff. Nature alone is ever young; the years die out, but nature is as young each spring as it was before the Rhine forced its way through the deep gorge that now confines its waters.

That Guss and Emma did more than enjoy the outward beauty, the rambles, and the novelty of these scenes is improbable; just now they were so taken up with the miracle called love, that they gave little attention to the miracles of natural beauty that surrounded them. They saw the flow of the river, they listened to the songs of the birds, they gathered the bright wild flowers,

but they thought little of these things beyond perceiving that they were all very pleasant, and all conduced to their present state of happiness.

Gladys, Seton, and Mrs. Filters had effected the Channel crossing at a most favourable moment. The dreaded sea passage had been a thing of pleasure; no ice bags or chloral had been required; Mrs. Filters, as she eat sandwiches on the deck, laughed at her former fears, and rather despised the sea. She said she had felt more motion going down to Rosherville, and she wondered how people could talk such foolishness about it; no one ought to be afraid of it who has once been on it.

In the best humour possible she had stepped ashore, and began at once a course of benign instruction to the poor foreigners; she looked on them as ignorant people, was ready to make every allowance for their absurd customs and their ridiculous language, and she patronized them as a missionary might Central Africans.

The little misunderstanding about the baggage necessitated by the Custom-house was got over without very much trouble, only the lettered lock was nearly having to be forced open, as Mrs.

Filters had forgotten the word, and could not recollect where she had written it down.

Ostend pleased Mrs. Filters very much, though the bathing was something too shocking, and there was a smell about the linen that no soap or soda could account for; it smelt exactly like a damp wall in a newly plastered house that had been shut up. She fairly roared at the washing basins; but she thought the dinner was tasty enough.

A long stretch to Cologne; battles with porters and railway officials, with Custom-house officers and ticket sellers, somewhat disturbed her serenity; she would not leave things to Seton. The Rhine, she thought, looked home-like; it reminded her of the Thames, only it was not at all equal to the English river, as seen from Rosherville.

They went to see all the sights, they became acquainted with many of the smells, and they bought spurious eau-de-Cologne. The soldiers seemed to Mrs. Filters more like firemen than real warriors; helmets she thought absurd, only fit for firemen and those old Romans who, according to their pictures, seemed not to wear much else.

"Give me a red coat, Seton; that is the proper dress for a soldier; these French ain't fit to lace the boots of our army."

Seton reminded her that they were in Germany, and these soldiers were Prussians; but she said, "that was all the worse for them, for Boney had beaten them, and we had beaten Boney."

"Yes, with their help—the Prussians and ourselves fought side by side."

"Prussians, indeed!" was Mrs. Filter's sneering rejoinder, "wasn't it the Duke beat the French at Waterloo? I suppose he was English?"

"But he was helped by the Prussians."

"Oh, if you are going to say we didn't win Waterloo, I think Gladys and me had better go and marry two Prussians, and have done with our 'omes and our Queen. Don't talk such rubbish, Seton, as if every one didn't know it was the Iron Duke that did it; isn't he put atop of the Arch because he did it? I have seen him often, horse and all."

Seton, worsted in argument, gave way like a sensible young man.

Mrs. Filters, elated with her victory, and wish

ing still further to disparage the Prussians, sneered next at the cathedral—

"Begun six hundred years ago, and not yet done, that doesn't say much for your Prussians; why St. Paul's has been built twice over in less time than that, and to my mind it is worth a dozen of these; why it has not even got a spire, let alone a dome."

They went on to Bonn, and they stopped a night at Koenigswinter, so as to make the ascent of the Drachenfels, which they accomplished on donkeys. This Mrs. Filters enjoyed immensely; she said, "It makes one feel quite a girl again. I always was fond of a donkey, lor' it's as good as 'Ampstead." Of the ruin itself she did not think much, but the little inn provided excellent trout, and a nice wine that was quite new to her, called Niersteiner; "just the wine for a hot day, you can drink as much as you like without its getting into your head, you can drink it in tumblers;" which Mrs. Filters did, and slept in the shade for long afterwards.

Meanwhile Gladys and Seton took their first deep draught of the glories of the Rhine; they sat and looked on the great river, and we may be very sure that Byron was quoted, and that

Seton received and returned the hand clasp, which the poet had found the one thing wanting to "those banks of Rhine."

The meeting between Emma and her mother was very joyful. "I ain't one of the crying ones," said the mother, "but lor', my dear, I am so glad to see you," and the tears fell fast from her full eyes. "There, I am a fool, but I can't 'elp it." She noted the happiness that could be clearly read in her daughter's glowing face, and she turned to Guss, and thanked him for his goodness to her girl.

They passed several days in Coblentz; visited Ems and Stolzenfels; crossed over to Lahneck, where in those days, the Irishman hoisted his flag whenever the Royal banner was displayed on Stolzenfels. They drove to Ehrenbreitstein, and to the plateau, from which the junction of the Rhine and the Moselle is visible—the Moselle, leaving its hilly banks, peacefully glides into the Rhine in the plain below the town.

Having exhausted the sights in the neighbourhood of Coblentz, and wishing for some quieter place to rest in during the hot weather, a council was held to choose a fitting spot. On

the one hand, Guss and Emma had seen the river above Coblentz; on the other hand, Mrs. Filters and her party had arrived *viâ* the lower half of the river.

"Why not go up the Moselle?" said Seton, who had been reading up the subject; there is a steamboat goes up twice a week, you recollect what a beautiful drive it was to Moselweiss, we all agreed it was better than the Rhine or Lahn."

There was a something about the word Moselle that Mrs. Filters liked, it was the name of a wine to which she was very partial, "just like drinking flowers set fizzing," she had said; so she voted for the Moselle. Gladys thought as Seton did. Guss and Emma just then thought all things and places good; the name, too, had a charm in it, and the glimpse they had already had of its scenery did not belie its name, which gave to their imaginations an idea of sparkle and of shade, of wreathed wine cups, running waters, and of old, old days.

Therefore a Moselle trip was decided on, and Seton was installed as guide and manager of matters in general; he was held

responsible for the inns and scenery, the comfort and enjoyment of the whole party. He and his chief counsellor put their heads very close together, and Gladys traced with her finger on the map the course they were to take; it was a very zig-zag course; the river continually turned round as though it were loth to quit the scenes it loved so well.

There seemed to be available resting places at each turn; it was very difficult to choose their first halting station. At length they fixed on Cochem, as perhaps more in the heart of the abounding beauties than any other site, and it was a nice distance by the boat.

"And," said Gladys, "we will go up to all the castles, sketch everything, sit about, pick wild flowers, go into the cellars and the doujons; won't it be nice?" Seton thought it would be very nice to do these things, especially in such company.

Cochem was reached after a passage up the river, that, constantly winding, revealed fresh beauties at each turn. The Moselle is so lovely, its green banks dip into the river, its villages full of quaint gables, peep through

the groves of walnut trees; its shores are rich with vineyards and fruit trees; towers and turrets, spires and arches, castles and old town walls adorn its course; cliffs covered with oak forest hem it in and prevent the vineyards becoming monotonous. No great roads line the banks, cutting off the towns and villages from the water's edge, and spoiling the picturesqueness of the scene. On the beaches women wash the clothes; beneath the groves the cattle stand, great ferry boats cross from shore to shore; masted barges are drawn up stream by horses, little boats sail down; the gentle river plashes by rock and meadow, by ruin and by town, reflecting each in its bright waters; the cows, knee deep in the refreshing stream, seem contemplating their own images; the fish shoot off in all directions, the fisherman plies his net, and the village girl dips in her pitcher.

At one moment the boat ascending brings the voyager to a cloister now ruined, and ruled over by the nightingales; then a great mass of rock seems to block the whole river, but rounding its base the stream again is gleaming before him, crowned by wooded forests, above which lordly castles lift themselves in air—castles still lordly

in their decay; still dominant over the river, though they themselves have succumbed to nature, which has clothed their walls with ivy, and their towers with lichens, which has rent their battlements asunder, and toppled down their turrets; where knights rode and ladies held their courts, only the owl and bat and frog hold sway.

Again the river bends and the voyager sees as it were a lake with green islands in it from which the tall poplars lift their heads in emulation of the cliffs, which with low swelling curve, lead the eye onward to where the full white clouds seem gathered together to look on the beauty of the scene.

Occasionally a sound of martial music, as soldiers pass inland, is heard; more often the songs of students break upon the air, as they sing beneath the cherry trees; and frequently there may be heard the solemn chant of pilgrims as they go in long processions to pray at the different shrines.

Satiated with new scenes and sounds so varied, the traveller is almost glad when the vessel stops and he is free to walk to land.

Through such a maze of beauty our voyagers

reached Cochem, and installed themselves in a clean and comfortable inn that faces the landing place. Here they were out of the track of ordinary tourists; here there was no English speaking waiter to oppress them with his civilities, only a smiling maiden who talked a language of which they were all quite ignorant; of course they had phrase books and dictionaries, but these did not go far in helping them. A phrase book would be very useful if only the other people could be induced to say the proper things, but they never will repeat what is set down for them.

Seton could, to a certain extent, make himself understood; his difficulty was to comprehend what was said to him; on the whole, it was fortunate that the landlady spoke a little English.

Mrs. Filters thought that the people were partly obstinate and partly deaf, so she took to speaking to them in a loud voice and with words very slowly enunciated, and uttered with great distinctness.

Generally this method produced a cheerful ja, ja; and something was fetched with great alacrity, but when she had said—

"I want

some pickles pick—el you know," and salted herring was brought, this method could hardly be considered efficacious. In such words as beer, butter, wine and the like, the success was far greater, and Mrs. Filters thought their language was not so difficult if only they would not pronounce it in such a funny way, and as to their books and writing they were too absurd, she had certainly understood that print was print all the world over.

They went excursions by water and by land; the lovers loitered in the dells and lingered in the forest; they made the old castles ring with their laughter and their songs; the echoes gave back their mirth and the stream reflected their bright faces. At times the hush of noontide or the tranquillity of evening would bring to Seton and to Gladys more serious thoughts; there was one spot within the walls of the castle, that dominates the town of Cochem, which was the especial retreat of these two lovers; from it they could see the windings of the river, the cattle driven home at evening, the vessels anchor for the night; from there they could see the sunset

linger on the cliffs, the grey shadows stealing ever higher, till below them lay the river with its fields and villages, its boats and fruit trees, its vineyards and its gardens, all shrouded in a thin grey mist, while on the hills above where the river had cleft its way, spires and trees and waving corn were still bright with the reflection of the western sky. Little wreaths of mist would creep up almost to the castle walls, but there they ceased to rise, and through them the valley of the Moselle looked like a fairy land, beautiful indeed, but cold and colourless compared to the glorious land above, where the light of heaven was shining.

The evening is a solemn time to those who notice and love the natural changes that hour by hour take place; daylight is perishing, gloom is spreading over earth; as surely as the night comes on so surely will the day return; of this thing we feel certain, but still we know a time will come when there will be no more day, at least no more for us: so we feel solemn.

"How beautiful it is, Seton," Gladys said; "how beautiful, but don't you think, dear, that the very excess of beauty makes one sad? I love to see the sun set, but it makes me feel as if life

was such a little thing; and yet, I love my life, it is so full of happiness."

"My darling, life is good, and I quite think with you, that excess of beauty, and even of happiness does make one sad, or rather solemn; it seems as if we feared we know not what, the more we love the more we fear; we prize the beauty and the happiness, therefore we fear to lose them; we have them but we cannot hold them; we feel our own weakness, and we fear that as the beauty may die out so may the happiness depart. O, my love, I hold you in my arms, but I have no real power to protect you, I twine round you the tendrils of my heart, but who can tell how they may be severed? It may be, that because I have suffered something from the world, I feel weak to protect; because I have been defeated and beaten, I feel fearful that my one only blessing may be reft from me. O, Gladys, my love, my darling, truly it is, as you said, excess of beauty does make one sad. I love you so much, you are so beautiful, not only your face and form, but also your heart and soul, my darling. I love you so dearly I sometimes think it would be good if you and I could pass *together from* this life into that better world

without change, without encountering more vicissitudes."

"You must not give way to fancies, you have had troubles, dear, but surely those are ended; when I spoke of sadness, I meant a sadness which is a pleasure in disguise, I do not think that we are happiest in our most cheerful hours; it seems to me that we are most truly happy when we are reflecting on the goodness of all that has been made for us. Seton, dear, when I think of my love for you, I do not smile or laugh, I feel what I call sad, just as I do when I look at the sun setting. Do not talk of another world, we are both so young, there may be much happiness in store for us in this world yet; drive away your cares, dear; promise me not to think too much about the past, but to look forward to the future."

"I will, my love; our future is clear before us, and I will look there. See, the sun is gone, but faith and hope remain."

"Yes, dear, and love."

The sun was gone, and as they descended from the castle, the afterglow came up and shone upon the cliffs.

"There," said Gladys; "there is our future,

de ar; just now those cliffs were grey and sad—look, are they not now more beautiful than ever."

Seton murmured—

"God grant that it may last."

They reached the hotel and entered. Before he went in, Seton turned, and he noted that the glow was gone, the cliffs again were grey, and the river looked cold and cheerless; but he said nothing.

They passed into the comfortable room where lights were burning, and Mrs. Filters, Guss and Emma were waiting tea for them.

"How late you are," said Guss.

"They forgot about such things as tea," said Mrs. Filters; "Emma and you can make allowances, I daresay, seeing it is only about five minutes since you came in from that ricketty old balcony."

CHAPTER XV.

AN ACCIDENT AND A JOURNEY.

The balcony spoken of in the last chapter, was a very advantageous spot from which to see everything that passed up and down the river. From the balcony, also, our tourists made bargains for flowers and fruit, which things, indeed, were so plentiful, that there was not much need to beat down prices, had it not been that the vendors seemed to be unwilling to sell at the proper price, without a preliminary chaffer; apricots, cherries, plums, apples, and grapes, the last small, and as yet sour, were to be had in profusion, and much of them was obtainable for very little coins that clearly were not silver, but only of plated metal, worn smooth by hard service; the cherries were especially abundant—each child that passed had bunches in its hand, or smears of juice upon its cheeks.

From the balcony, the landing stage was in full view, so there Gladys was in the habit of sit-

ting and furtively sketching the groups who collected just opposite, half hidden by a great veronica, two of which in monster pots ornamented the shaky balcony; she was able to fill her sketchbook with life studies from the unconscious models who were waiting for the boats.

On the day which succeeded that mentioned in the last chapter, Gladys was employed as usual at that hour. Emma and Guss were out, Seton was writing a letter in the sitting room, and Mrs. Filters was busy battling with the washerwoman.

Washerwomen were the bane of her Cochem existence, they were so troublesome; they would batter off the buttons, they persisted in starching the shirt-fronts till they were like sheets of iron rather than linen; they charged enormously, and they shrank the flannel. All other things at Cochem were cheap and satisfactory, but the washing was neither; nor could poor Mrs. Filters obtain any redress of these washing grievances. The landlady's English did not seem to extend to washing, or she was afraid to offend the washerwoman. Mrs. Filters had called her in to assist at the interview now going on, as all her pantomime of rubbing garments carefully so as

not to injure buttons had been thrown away on the stolid washerwoman, who, together with her girl, a friend who had accompanied her, and the cheerful maid, looked on at all Mrs. Filters did, and said "ja, ja," at intervals.

The landlady merely increased the number of the chorus, she was of no assistance whatever.

Mrs. Filters held up one of the stiff shirts, tapped the sheet-iron front, and said—

"Too much starch," very slowly and loudly.

The chorus said, "ja, ja."

Mrs. Filters said, "But . . . tons . . . gone all gone."

Chorus said, "ja, ja."

Mrs. Filters took up a shrunken flannel garment, and said—

"Not good; neesht goot."

In procession, the landlady, the washerwoman, the washerwoman's girl, the friend, and the maid servant advanced, and each in turn felt the garment with thumb and finger, then uttered "ja, ja, es ist gut, sehr gut flannel."

Poor Mrs. Filters, finding nor words nor pantomime avail, thought she would see if Seton

could assist in any way; she had done all she could to make the stupid creatures understand—she had talked till she was nearly hoarse, now she would fetch Seton.

Just as she entered the sitting room, there came from the balcony a cry of "Seton, Seton, help!"

Seton dashed to the open window, and there he saw Gladys apparently sinking through the balcony. She held one hand towards him, with the other she was clinging to a projection of the wall. "It is giving way," she said.

A man below had seen what was taking place, and calling out something, he ran off.

Seton went towards Gladys, and took her by the hand, but he could do nothing to extricate her, for her foot had gone quite through the woodwork. While Seton was hesitating what to do, the man who had run off, returned with a ladder; mounting on which, he soon managed to tear away from underneath the rotten wood that surrounded Gladys' foot, thus enabling Seton to draw her up. She was carried into the room, and Mrs. Filters found her foot was not crushed, but a good deal sprained and swollen. A doctor was sent for, who treated the swollen ankle

with cold water, and then Gladys was put to bed.

They had known and remarked on the rottenness of the floor of the balcony, and they had been careful how they had trod on parts of it; but Gladys, excited at seeing one of the bargemen beating his horses, had incautiously rested her full weight on the worst spot; hence the misfortune.

"For a moment, I thought it was all giving way, that was what made me cry out so foolishly," she told Seton; but there was no occasion for her to apologize for the want of bravery, for she stood the pain of pouring cans of cold water on the afflicted part with great fortitude.

"There," thought Seton to himself, when left alone in the sitting room, "I thought something would come of my last night's forebodings; thank God it is no worse. When she cried out, it seemed to me for a moment as if she was gone from me for ever, as she has done sometimes in my dreams—can there be truth in dreams? How do they come? I see in them people and places that I never knew; things happen in them quite as life-like as when we are awake. I wonder, do dreams foreshadow events, or are they remini-

scences of things we have somewhere experienced. Sleep, they say, is akin to death—can it be that there is no quiet in the grave? Will dreams in sleep have their counterpart in death?"

Then, as he thought of death, he shuddered; he had been very near those ebon gates which open but once, and then shut for eternity; once he had quite given his farewell to life; in fever and in sorrow he had almost looked on the grave as a refuge—he had been so battered, so worn with trouble; he had felt life was very barren, and almost longed for the peace of the tomb—now he wondered whether there was peace there. He no longer had any hankering for the peace of oblivion, he only wondered about such peace aimlessly; he wished now that he might live long to cherish Gladys; any fear he now had was not for himself, but for her; as he said, "He loved, therefore he feared." He had had forebodings of ill, now ill was come, but not as he had expected—this was a small ill. Forebodings were absurdities, silly weaknesses, drivelling rubbish; for one foreboding a man has that turns out to be followed by any incident, he has about While Seton was calculating the hundreds and thousands of forebodings

that foreshadow nothing, Mrs. Filters came in and said—

"She is sleeping sweetly. Lor', what a turn it did give me; if we are going to stop on here, that place must be new floored—she might have been killed."

It was a week before Gladys could be moved with anything like comfort. The incident had given them a dislike to Cochem, and the doctor recommended that they should go to Bertrich, where the baths would assist the weak ankle to recover. So the sojourn at Cochem came to an end, and they went by boat to Alf, then on to Bertrich through the pretty side valley. Seton and Gladys went in one carriage, Mrs. Filters and the baggage in another, Guss and Emma walked.

Seton was now able to laugh at the accident; the foot was uninjured, and the ankle was getting strong again. He made Gladys a rest to put the injured foot upon, stole his arm round her, and said—

"I thought something was going to happen, and you see I was right."

"Yes, goosey; and a great thing to have been so prophetic and solemn about, wasn't it? Not

dear, that I wouldn't have you solemn at times, I think I love you most when you are so; but you see now what a little mouse has crept out from your mountain."

"'Her little feet, like little mice crept in and out,' I forget the exact words, but that is something like what has been said—your little foot crept in, but it could not creep out again. I really believe it was the coming of your accident that overshadowed me that evening."

"Then please don't get overshadowed again; if you are going to do it often, I shall have a bad time of it; please have a presentiment of some trout and reh-braten at Bertrich, for I am getting so hungry; you can make it partridges and plums if you like, only let it be something nice."

The drive from Alf to Bad Bertrich is certainly not one calculated to induce gloom; with Gladys smiling at his side, and the trees rustling overhead, each turn of the road giving fresh peeps of forest and of running water, the Alf brook meeting them with bubbling exuberance, Seven gave forebodings to the winds, and when they arrived at the inn, all the luxuries Gladys had desired were forthcoming. So it may be yet

sumed he had looked forward to the bright side of things as she had directed.

The waters of Bertrich, the charms of the valley, which lies amid the forest-clad cliffs round which the bright brook flows, making it appear like a green bowl with a silver rim, worked wonders for Gladys. The Bad is just the inn, the Bad-haus, a church, and a green field round which the Alf brook circles. Soon she was able to mount the winding paths, drink from the rock that holds the ice-cold spring, called the Peter's brunnen, and explore the cheese grotto, so called from the shape of its supporting pillars.

The days sped swiftly, and Gladys became able to extend her walks to the heights above the beech and oak groves; they explored on foot, and in carriages drove to the more distant points, such as the Marienburg, from where the river Moselle seems winding away in four different directions, each reach of water having its own especial beauty. One winds away far as the eye can reach towards the Rhine, another seems to stop at the town of Zell, famous for its wine; a third lies like a blue streak in a setting of emerald banks; and the upper branch glitters among trees and villages.

At the little inn, or hunting lodge, inside the ruins, our party passed one very delightful evening. The landlord and his two sisters were all musical, and they all spoke a little English; Mrs. Filters was in ecstasies; she told them of her troubles, and took counsel from them; Gladys sang, and the Germans sang and played. What happy hours!—care was banished, dead hopes were buried, the very mourning for them was over; it seemed to Seton as if the accident to Gladys had been the last ordeal they would have to undergo. Truly it had been a harmful thing, but the hurt was well, nature had repaired the injury, and that frail plank, that rotten balcony, was the last ordeal through which they would have to pass; the evil was over—love and peace and happiness were before them.

As they drove home through the winding valley, Seton whispered in the ear of his affianced—

"Is not life good?"

"Yes, dear, if passed with you," was the reply; "I am so happy."

The single and the married lovers would have lingered on at Bertrich for a time illimitable, but Mrs. Filters began to find it just a little

dull. She missed her household cares, and she missed the shops; there were no shops at Bertrich. If she had but understood the language, she could have employed herself learning from the landlady some of the secrets of her wonderful cuisine. The huge omelets, the various stews, the extraordinary vegetables, were all matters of wonderment to her; first she had disparaged them, then eaten them; finally she had praised them, and become eager to manufacture similar dishes; but that troublesome language barred all asking of questions and receiving satisfactory answers.

"I do not say they are bound to talk as we do," she explained to Guss, "but I do think the Queens and Kings and Parliaments might get together, and agree among themselves to have a language which all the children in all the countries should be taught; then in a few years we should all speak the same, and there would be no more bother."

Guss was much struck with the simplicity of this plan, and really thought it was a good idea, but Emma said—

"It would not help us much, though, mother, for we should have to learn as well as the children."

"That is as it might be, my dear," replied her mother; "for my part I should think they would choose English as the language to be taught, it is certainly the easiest and the most natural; just look at one of our books side by side with one of these German books, or one of their newspapers and the 'Times.' Seton, I will write to the 'Times' about it; what do you think?"

Seton thought the idea most excellent, only people are so prejudiced. Each nation would wish to have its own language made the universal one; they would never agree.

"Then let them draw lots," triumphantly settled Mrs. Filters, who, in her mind's eye, saw the near approach of the millennium brought about by her means.

She did write to the "Times" on the subject, but as yet her letter has not appeared.

In the meanwhile, as the universal language had not been brought out when Mrs. Filters was a girl, she could not converse with the landlady beyond, "it is varm to-day eesh veel something goot to eaten have to speisen."

Also there were washerwomen; even in this happy valley clean linen was a necessity; so

there were washerwomen, and that meant contention. Mrs. Filters hated contention, and on warm Mondays she almost wished she was where no washing was wanted, and no washerwomen would ever trouble; she felt that cleanliness was much to be desired, but the cost was very great; the thing was dear enough in thalers and in groschen, but in wear of mind and tear of clothes it was more than she cared to pay. She would do all the mending and repairs herself; she sewed on the buttons and the strings, she darned the socks, and repaired the rents made by the ruthless bats and stones that formed the scrubbing apparatus of the washerwomen. Gladys and Emma offered their assistance, but Mrs. Filters always said—

"My dears, you are out for pleasure, leave me to darn and stitch; you go and make holes, leave me to mend them. I don't grudge fair wear and tear, it is the battering and banging I grumble at; not but what Seton's socks are almost past mending; mind he has a new set of everything before the happy day, Gladys."

On the whole, then, Mrs. Filters was ready to snatch at the idea of Treves when some one spoke of the Roman remains there, the Porta

Nigra, and the baths; she had some notion that where there were baths, there might be better washerwomen; she did not care about antiquities, but she did look forward to buying Seton some new socks. There must be decent shops in a town like that, she thought.

The vintage had begun, a soft haze was in the air, the autumn glory was on the trees. As our party passed up the river towards Treves, boats full of grapes were seen crossing from bank to bank; the peasants sang, and offered first fruits at the numerous shrines. It was a full year; the corn was garnered, the leaves for bedding had been gathered, the fruit crop had been sold; now the wine presses were at work. The walls of the old castles, and the recesses of the woods, echoed back the joyful shouts that arose on all sides; garlands were made, and maidens crowned; the sharp tap of the coopers rang through all the land; more and more barrels were required.

Our party enjoyed the busy scene; they passed upwards slowly, taking boats from place to place, and exploring the castles as they went; there were no guides to provoke, or beggars to annoy; *they could* wander where they chose without

molestation; the castles required no unlocking. The only difficulty was to find the disused paths, or surmount the fallen stones.

Pleasant villages with homely tidy inns abounded, the peasants that they met wished them a cheerful "guten tag" or "guten abend;" all was new and all was delightful.

Treves was reached at last, and the antiquities were visited; also the socks were bought.

At the hotel was a charming waiter who spoke English like a native; metaphorically speaking, Mrs. Filters threw herself into his arms, and we may be sure that the washerwomen of Treves had a bad time of it, when they came before these united forces.

Now the time had come when the future movements of our party must be settled; the autumn was nearly over. The weather was still splendid, but there was a frostiness in the air, that reminded them winter was at hand.

"How pleasant it would be if we could pass the winter where no snow, or fog, or ice prevail; let us go south," said Seton.

"To Italy," said Gladys; "to Italy and see the palaces and pictures, the churches and the temples, the ruins and the towns."

"Yes," said Emma, "we shall have such music in the churches and the theatres, and we can pic-nic in the amphitheatres."

"And we can have a yacht, and go on to Greece, and see Corfu and Albania, there is such capital shooting in Albania, I have been told," said Guss.

Mrs. Filters was wishing to go back to Remington Place, when this douche of Italy was suddenly turned on. The Italy they had spoken of was not her Italy; it might be indeed a place of churches and of ruins, but it was also a land of brigands and assassins, of dirt and beggars, of organ-grinders and monkey-men. She had read of dark doings behind convent walls, she had seen the Italian race in London, and she would none of that country. She would do much to oblige; her heart was in Remington Place, still she would, if they all desired it so very much, remain abroad; but she would not go to Italy.

No argument moved her; it was useless to tell her that brigandage scarcely existed anywhere, and not at all in those parts they would visit, that there were not more cut-throats than in other countries, that the hotels there were very good

and clean, and that convents could have no terrors for them.

She only answered—

"My dears, you may know best, but to Italy I don't go; I have read about Italy, and I have seen the Italians."

The waiter was consulted as to a good place in which to pass the winter months; he had been at many places and they thought his knowledge might avail them, also Mrs. Filters had a high opinion of his wisdom.

The waiter first suggested Nice, where his uncle kept an excellent hotel; but alas, Nice then was in Italy, and even the waiter's words failed to convince Mrs. Filters that Nice was not therefore the home of the assassin and the haunt of the robber. Then the waiter bethought him of a cousin at Arcachon, and so praised that place that they all longed to go there.

"Yes," he said, "you shall go to Arcachon, it is a place of the most quiet, but it is the most healthful. You have there the grand forest with its fine trees, you have all the fish of the ocean and the oysters of the Bassin, also you have a hotel so excellent, situated on the shore where no mud is, but beautiful smell you call iodine, that

makes to be most that is salubrious. *Mon Dieu!* the fish of the basin is *exquis.*"

He so smacked his lips over the fish, so praised his cousin's hotel, drew such a charming picture of the forest, that they determined to make Arcachon their resting place for the winter. Even if they did not like it they could go on to Pau.

Seton especially approved the plan; there would be such rest and peace in those fine woods, such draughts of health could be drained on the shores of the great basin. He did not want to racket to and fro, his health was not yet sufficiently strong to make much exertion a pleasure; he would love to sit in the woods and sail upon those quiet waters.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE PINE FOREST.

It was a long journey from the banks of the Moselle to those of the Garonne, but our party travelled by easy stages, the country through which they passed offered constant change and each day produced incidents that amused or interested them.

Bordeaux was reached at last; then a three hours drive took them on to Arcachon, where they found the hotel kept by the cousin of the Treves waiter was a very queer place, now nearly empty.

In the bathing season it had been crowded; each of its little square rooms had been full of beds, its creaking wooden galleries had been thronged by the guests who all day long had lounged there, or on the beach clad in bathing dresses of hideous appearance. Now nearly all these guests were gone back to Bordeaux, and our party could choose among the numerous rooms that were like cabins, only larger.

The whole place seemed rickety, the garden was a waste of sand and stunted trees, there was an air of wild desolation about this hotel that gave it the appearance of a gigantic frame house in the backwoods. Other houses near had gardens well kept and, in spite of the sand, full of flowers, but at this place no attention was paid to beauty, only to profit.

Finding the hotel so comfortless, and being otherwise pleased with the place, our party searched for a suitable habitation; the great hotel was not then built, and all the other lodging houses were nearly as bad as that kept by the waiter's cousin; however, they luckily found a furnished villa at some little distance from the sea, and there they established themselves, to the regret of their landlord who had heard from his cousin at Treves, that these English would pass the winter with him, and were people who could be bled of their gold with great ease; in short, they were as great fools as the English usually were.

The villa our party had taken stood on a sand hill at an elevation of some forty feet above the Bassin, high enough to allow them to look on *the waters* over the trees that stood between it

and the shore; in the garden were trees and shrubs all growing out of the sea sand and apparently thriving on it—the secret was plenty of water.

This villa, in common with all other houses in the place, was built without any foundations, just erected on the sand; it seemed firm, and was substantial enough. It had a covered verandah from which the boats could be seen coming and going between the fishery and the place where they were unladen and the fish packed up and sent off to Bordeaux and even to Paris.

Here Seton and Gladys would often discuss their future that now seemed so near. All was arranged; early in the spring they would all return to England; then they were to be married and they would settle down. Seton had made up his mind not to care about these new people at Westerham; they would take a small house in that neighbourhood, and perhaps accept such appointment as might be offered Seton—in any case they would have enough for their modest requirements. Everything was quite settled.

The winter was mild, and they thought they had been wise to come to Arcachon, but Mrs. Filters was fidgetty and longing to return to Remington Place; letters also came from Aunt

Mary pressing the return of Guss and Emma, so it was agreed that as soon as the days got a little longer, they would all go back home.

The provisions were pretty good, but the beef was a source of much fault-finding with Mrs. Filters.

"Well, if that is beef, ours isn't, that's all," she would say; and she felt quite sorry for the wife of the clergyman who did the duty there; she seemed so very delicate that Mrs. Filters longed to cook her great joints of English beef, wherewith to fatten and strengthen her. This lady was consumptive, and spoke quite cheerfully of dying; death was a thing she had long expected, and she only wondered she was still alive, so many doctors had doomed her.

When Mrs. Filters mourned the want of good beef on her account, she only smiled, and said she feared there were worse things than the want of English beef the matter with her, that she had been told snails were better for people in her condition than any meat; and she added, "I am sure there are plenty here."

"Eat snails!" said Mrs. Filters.

"Oh, there are plenty in the market. I have *eaten snail* soup, and it is very good."

Mrs. Filters was horrified; nevertheless, she took to this young creature doomed to exile and an early death, but so cheerful under sentence; and Mrs. Mayford took to the kindly woman, whose nature was easily read by the lustrous eyes and keen judgment of the consumptive girl—she was but a girl not yet twenty.

Her husband had brought her to Arcachon, as the sole hope of her recovery lay in a warm climate. He trusted that the fragrance of the pines, the ozone from the air, and the iodine from the seaweed, would give his bride strength to throw off this disease; in short, he hoped, and for a time she seemed to mend, but that was during the first winter; it was but a flicker of the flame of life—the enemy was staved off, but not defeated; he still hoped, but she had ceased to hope, that they two would be long together. She was quite reconciled to going, except in that she would have to leave her husband alone.

She took Mrs. Filters one day to the little cemetery that lies back in a sweep of the forest, and there she showed her the place where her one little baby was laid, and where her husband had promised to lay her down beside the remains of

that little life which had but glimmered, and then gone on before.

Mrs. Filters was deeply touched; and when she returned to their villa she hugged Emma, as she found her standing strong and beautiful, with health mantling in her face, and she felt very thankful that her daughter was not as Mrs. Mayford.

And certainly Emma did not require snail soup, she was the picture of health. By her side, Gladys looked delicate and fragile, although she was, in reality, sufficiently strong. Mrs. Filters, afraid that her admiration of her daughter's healthful appearance might be taken as implying a doubt concerning that of Gladys, followed up her hugging of Emma, and her praises of her girl's health and strength, by putting in a few words concerning Gladys—"Not but what your roses are as fresh as Emma's, my dear, only you are a blush rose, and she is a red rose."

Thereupon Guss sang, "My love is like a red, red rose," and they were all gay and happy; health was theirs, and death a thing very far away—the little burial-ground was a thing hidden very far back in the forest; consumption

had nothing to do with them. Later in the day, when Seton and Gladys were alone, he said—

"It is very sad for poor Mayford; but he must have known it when he married her."

"Yes, dear; but I don't suppose that he really expected she would die; even now he believes she may recover, perhaps she may—God is very good."

"I daresay he thought like that; at any rate, he will have had her with him as long as she was spared. But even that may make the parting more bitter. I am so thankful you are not delicate; you look like a very fairy, and yet you are strong; you look as if a wind would blow you away, and yet you are not fragile. Oh, my dear, were I Mayford and you as she is, I could not bear it."

"Don't get gloomy, Seton, I am as strong as what shall I say? as one of those tall fir trees that, rooted only in sand, yet stand the winds, and live to grow into quite old trees."

"And like them, you make all around fragrant with the sweetness that is your natural atmosphere. Come out now, and let us walk among your prototypes."

Together they went out, and wandered by the shore towards the forest; they looked on the fisherpeople dragging in their nets; they climbed the bank, and entered the solemn avenue of trees; they drank in the resinous odours; then, full of health and spirits, they returned, and once more all members of that merry party assembled on the terrace of the villa—once more the day closed, and our happy party drew round the wood fire, and the hissing urn.

Seton had benefited very much by the mild winter, and the rest and peace of the pine forest; beyond those trees, over those waters that divided them from England, there was waiting for him a life of happiness, with Gladys for a household deity.

In Arcachon there was a sprinkling of winter residents enough to make up a cheerful society; these frequently joined together to make pic-nic parties, or take walks or drives to the different points of interest in the vicinity. Among the later arrivals, was Emily Lacy, sister of Seton's friend Ralph.

She had much to tell Seton of her brother's last days, how he had been full of affection for *him, how his* thoughts had constantly recurred

to the days Seton and he had passed together, when they had planned out their future lives, and had confided to each other their innermost feelings. Ralph had been very grateful for Seton's care of him in those days, and he had longed to see him once more before he died.

Emily Lacy, who had been deeply attached to her brother, took delight in narrating to Gladys the goodness of Seton to Ralph in those days at Pau, when, only met together by accident, Seton had been as a brother to Ralph.

Gladys loved to listen to these praises; she knew how sweet and gentle Seton's nature was, but she could not hear too often that another had found out and appreciated it. She knew how lovable he was, but she was aware that in his own family he was hardly esteemed as she thought he ought to be. By the light of his tenderness for Ralph, she judged of his love for herself, and, if possible, a deeper love for him sprang up within her. She had always loved him from the first day she ever saw him; that day when poor old Blinky died in her arms and he was good to her she had loved him. When they two had gathered the spring flowers together, when he had garlanded her with daffodils, and

crowned her with primroses she had loved him; when he had taken her by the hand and told her of his love for her, her heart had been wholly his. But this was different; now she analysed her love, and found that he was dearer than even she had ever conceived. Before, she had loved him because she had loved him. Now, she loved him, because she knew that he was worthy of her love—because she knew his mind was a jewel of great price; she had loved the setting, now she loved the heart so set.

And so with Seton; now that she and he were come together in close communion, he found that each day added to his knowledge of her—each day she stirred afresh, and ever deeper, the well-springs of his heart. He, too, had loved as long as he had known, but man-like he had been less constant, less absolutely firm in his conduct. He had been thoughtless, and he had been foolish; but that little girl with the large, earnest blue eyes, and the hair of two shades of colour, had ever been to him the type of all that is good and sweet and pure. When he once more met those earnest eyes, all thoughts of others that had arisen were swept away at once; he knew that

his happiness was there, that with her, and in her love, he would be secure—could he gain that love? was the only question. Then a time came when he had gained it, and he was able to look forward to a life with her passed in mutual love, and ministering to each others happiness. Storms had afterwards arisen, and for a time driven "beauty and gladness away;" but these had passed, the sun once more had shone, the air again was warm, the stream of life again was very fair, ripples were on the sea, and roses bloomed on shore.

Those solemn pine woods, where he and Gladys so loved to wander, were not places for mirth; among those still trees laughter seemed out of place. In forests people do not laugh, but those who think, feel their solemnity; on mountain tops, with earth lying at your feet, the glad sight may make the heart expand in song, but amid the forest solitudes a deeper joy springs within you; a joy that swells into prayer rather than into song. Away in these great woods, so silent and so solemn, life is everywhere at work; the sandhills, apparently so barren, are swarming with life; there are the pine trees, the creeping plants and grasses that gradually spread

over the surface; there are the tribes of insects that have their homes in the trees, and the multitudes that live in the sands. Man is the dominant creature, the lord of earth, but there are races and tribes and kingdoms that he cannot subdue, neither can he count them.

To these lovers the forest was a fairy land—life was a sweet romance; in those woods their life seemed like a page from an old story, a tale of olden days, when the lady and the lover lived a life of solitude, free from all cares, secure from the tyrant they had fled from.

Gladys seated on a pile of fallen branches, which Seton had collected and throned her on, was like one of those princesses in nature as in name and beauty, who have been sung of in a thousand lays.

Lying at her feet, and looking into her eyes, the wind gently rustling in the tall trees, a faint sound of distant sea breaking on the shore, glimpses of blue sky flecking the tree tops, the heaven itself visible in those eyes, Seton's heart was almost sore with the very intensity of his love.

"Oh, Gladys, can it be that we are too happy; *will it last?*"

"Why not, dear? remember you are not to forebode; recollect my poor foot, it is hardly well yet.'

"My darling, I do not forebode; only I feel so happy, my life has culminated; can it stand still, can we remain supremely happy in this world? Oh, my darling, pray with me that our happiness may last."

And those two young souls prayed aloud, in the pine forest, that God would guard and keep them from all peril.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAKE OF THE WATER NYMPHS.

ARCACHON is a curious place; it straggles for nearly two miles along the south shore of the great Bassin, which is protected and separated from the sea by a long spit of land that juts out from the northern shore, and overlaps the southern coast, leaving only a wide entrance that is not visible from the town; in short the Bassin is a sea lake. Every part of the shore is covered by trees, nearly all pines; but about the town many groves of hard wood flourish.

Scattered among these, the houses, for the most part built of wood, look like an American or an Australian settlement, rather than a French town; they are of all shapes and sizes, many have pretty gardens, in which roses abound and seem to flourish although grown in sheer sea sand.

There is an artesian well, which gives an abundant supply of water, and the rainfall is *carefully* collected from the roofs, and stored

in great tanks in the cellars, where the water is filtered, so becoming excellent for all household purposes, including drinking.

For some years there has been a Casino, a Grand Hotel, and many fine stone houses in Arcachon, but this was not so at the time our party sojourned there. The days of this sojourn were drawing to a close; in another three weeks our party was to leave Arcachon, and return, *viâ* Paris and Boulogne, to England. As Arcachon is a sort of oasis in the desert of sand and pine forest, so the sojourn there had been as a time past in an "Island of the Blest;" the perfect freedom, the novelty of the place, the picturesqueness of the people and their civility, the mildness of the climate, which had made winter pass away without the cold being greater than to warrant a good wood fire, which, blazing with fir cones, rendered the evenings very cheerful; all these things had made the sojourn at Arcachon a time on which to look back with pleasure, possibly with regret, in after years.

This narrative concerning Seton Herold draws to a close. In this last chapter of it, it is permissible to remind the reader that Seton

entered on life as an only son, and heir to a good property; he lost that property by no fault of his own. His prospects were further injured by the bad advice and the rascality of Garston, also by the conduct of Hodges; for these things he was in some measure responsible, but his indiscreetness arose from ignorance, in the first place, of law which he had thought was synonymous with justice, and in the second place, by ignorance of the treachery of men—he himself had gone into the world full of honourable feelings, and he had believed that others were like himself: he trusted in Garston and was betrayed.

All along, his uncle had led him to expect a share of his fortune; his uncle had interested himself in him, and his doings; he had preached to him, and he had taken him to task; such conduct from an uncle to a nephew had been only justifiable on the supposition that the nephew was to inherit from the uncle; moreover Seton had been the old man's sole male relative. These expectations had turned out to be badly founded; his uncle had married a servant, and left his nephew one hundred pounds. *The woman* had obtained the whole fortune.

Thus all things had failed with Seton Herold: he had lost his estate; he had not received a share of his uncle's fortune; he had been drawn into a law suit; he had suffered in health, and by treachery; he was left without a profession or occupation—instead of being lord of Westerham, he now would hardly be able to keep a cottage over the heads of Gladys and himself.

Gladys! There was his compensation; in her was his happiness; her love was his treasure, her heart was his sure refuge. Occupation might be wanting, education might have been thrown away, his time wasted, but with her love and her help, he would be able to surmount all difficulties—he would find some fitting work to do, and rejoice in doing it, sustained as he would be by her. He would not be able to take her to a country seat, and surround her with every luxury; but he would be able to make her happy in a cottage. They might, and doubtless would, have before them toils and cares, but the walls and fences of a country seat could no more guard from these than those of a cottage could.

The quiet restful winter among the pines had brought back to Seton health and serenity; his

mind had regained its balance; he had lost the feeling of oppression that had so long overshadowed him; he had become tranquilly happy. In a very few weeks he and Gladys would be one in name, as they had long been in affection.

The little society, accidentally met together at Arcachon, had frequently joined in excursions to the different places near, and by this time all the usual resorts had been exhausted. So every one was glad when Mr. Mayford suggested that they should go and see a large fresh water lake which lay back in the forest several miles away.

Even he had never been there; it was a place little known, and rarely visited by strangers. There was a village near it, and the lake was full of fish, and that was nearly all he knew about it, except that it was very large, and the country people believed that it was haunted by supernatural beings; water spirits had been seen there, and strange tales were told concerning them.

This was delightful; Gladys thought a visit to this lake would make a charming finish to the happy days they had passed at Arcachon. She quite revelled in the idea of the water nymphs, and hoped she should see one.

It so chanced that Mrs. Mayford's birthday was at hand, and this becoming known, it was determined that the pic-nic should be held in honour of this, her twentieth birthday; she had been better than usual for some days past, and she was pleased at the attention and the kindness of the thought.

Mrs. Filters took on herself the principal arrangements concerning food. Seton and Guss rendered every assistance in procuring material for her to work on. It was to be a most sumptuous affair.

The day appointed turned out most propitious, there was a fresh breeze, but in those sheltered woods it was merely necessary to wear warm dresses; the cold did not penetrate. They started four carriages full of gay people, and the drive was most exhilarating; stories were told of water spirits in many lands, tales remembered or invented for the occasion. Guss, from the box seat, narrated the experiences of an old sailor, and drew such a picture of the charms of a certain nymph, that Gladys said she would tell Emma, and neither he nor Seton should be trusted to look at the nymphs of the lake they were going to, as they might get enchanted.

They arrived at the village; there they left the carriages, and, in charge of a guide, they all went off to the lake. There was no regular path, only tracks through the forest. Arrived at the edge of the water, the party dispersed; some went to arrange the dinner—among these were Seton and Guss; others wandered in different directions, warned by the guide not to go far as the forest was thick, and a return would be difficult if they got beyond reach of voice.

The lake was, as they had been told, a very large body of water; all round it were trees completely covering the shores, in it were growing tall rushes, which hindered the view; the whole place had an air of desolation, there were no clearings, and no sign of life. The trees advanced into the water, and the water spread itself into the land; there was a look of chaos about the scene that would have suited the Red River better than it did a lake in France. It really seemed as if Indians, or other wild people, must be the fishers of those waters.

Just now even the fishing boats were all away at other parts of the lake. Their solitary representative was an old punt that swung to a stake

close by where Gladys, Emma, and Mrs. Mayford were standing talking to the guide.

This guide was a fine old man who was half fisherman, half gamekeeper, and had been a soldier. He told them stories of war, and of the chase; then Gladys questioned him concerning the water nymphs, and he replied that the men who drew pitch from the pines, and led lonely lives on the borders of this great water, had often seen them, at least they said so, but for his part he did not believe them. He thought it was all foolishness, but who could tell; the lake might have its secrets as well as the sea, and he had always understood that the sea was peopled with mermaids.

Gladys was charmed with the old man, she induced him to talk on about the water nymphs, and it was evident that though he spoke lightly of the belief of others in them, yet he himself was not wholly an unbeliever.

"I should so like to see one," Gladys said, "cannot you show me one?"

"No," he replied, "I have never seen one myself. They say that they only appear to those who are about to come in for some piece of good luck; for my part I never did come in for good

luck, perhaps that is the reason I never have seen one."

"Or rather," Gladys laughed, "the reason you never had good luck is that you never saw one of the water nymphs. Now, I want some good luck, so I must see one; where do they live?"

"If I could tell you I would, mam'selle, for you should be born to good luck."

"There now, after that you shall have the honour of taking me out on the water. Then, when we are alone, you will tell me the secret."

"Don't be so eager, mam'selle, there are two sides to a *brioche*, and so to these spirits; some say that to see them brings bad luck, and that may be one reason I never have seen them; for I have not had bad luck, although I have never had much that was good."

"You only want to put me off," said Gladys, "and I have made up my mind; only take me over to that point, something tells me that round that corner I shall see things. Now draw in the punt; I wonder you don't have better boats."

"The others are all away, mam'selle; if I had only known you were coming, I would have had boats ready. You shall have one after you have *eaten your* dinner."

"No, no, that will not do, then all the others will go; I want to go by myself."

Emma said, "Don't go in that punt, Gladys, it may tip over."

And Mrs. Mayford urged her to wait till after dinner.

But Gladys said if they all went it would frighten the nymphs, and she would be sure not to see them; she finished with, "please let me go. I should be so disappointed if I did not go just to that point."

The old chasseur said "there was no danger whatever, the boat was quite safe, only it was uncomfortable; still he could make a seat for mam'selle, if she wished to go; not that the water nymphs were anything poof, ... they were all nonsense."

It ended by his arranging a seat, and Gladys got into the punt, saying—

"I will come back in a very short time. He shall just land me there, and I will peep round the corner; then I will, after dinner, tell you all what I have seen; now all of you wish me good luck."

This they all did, and Emma added—

"Make haste back, or we shall be late for

dinner, and that never brought luck to any one."

The old man undid the punt from its fastenings, and pushed it through the rushes into the open water; Emma and Mrs. Mayford remained to receive Gladys on her return. It was much further across than these two had fancied, and as the boat got near the other shore, there was evidently a strong current, but the old man managed the punt very skilfully, and eventually they saw Gladys land, and disappear in the forest. She waved her handkerchief to them; then they lost sight of her.

While they were waiting for her re-appearance, Seton and Guss, having finished their preparations for the dinner, came down to the water, and soon after Mrs. Filters and some of the others arrived.

"Where is Gladys?" asked Seton.

Emma told him, and they all laughed at her expedition in search of luck and water nymphs.

"I am sure," Mrs. Mayford said, "she has no need of looking for fairies; she is the very picture of one herself."

"Well," said Guss, "she can look in the water, and then she will have seen a beautiful *water nymph.*"

"Yes," said Mrs. Filters, "and I am sure she will be her own good luck, and bring it to her 'usband."

Seton said, "Thank you for both of us."

While thus they talked lightly, and laughed at their own conceits, suddenly they saw the old chasseur, who had been sitting in the punt waiting for Gladys, stand up and push his boat off towards the point to the far side of which Gladys had gone. He evidently used every exertion, but his progress was slow; probably the current was strong.

They were now all standing up on a fallen tree, so they could see over the rushes; presently the chasseur rounded the point, and disappeared.

They looked at one another; what could be the meaning of this sudden action of the old man? Perhaps it was only that Gladys had called to him to come round.

Guss, with an effort at raillery, suggested that she wanted him to see the nymphs she had discovered; but the joke fell flat.

They all looked at each other, but there was no comfort in any face.

While they still looked, trying to read each others thoughts, a cry came faintly over the water

to where they stood; Seton exclaiming, "she is calling to me," rushed to the edge of the lake; Guss following, caught him by the arm.

"My God! what can have happened," said Seton, with his face blanched; "is there no other boat?"

"No, there is not, be calm Seton; it all may be nothing, in any case we cannot assist."

Then finding he could not see the point from where he stood, Seton returned to the log.

Guss meanwhile ran off to the village to find out where another boat might be had.

It was a full half hour before there was any change in the situation; all that time Seton stood like a statue on the highest part of the log, holding on to a branch, watching the point round which the punt had disappeared; the others, together with the remainder of the party who had by this time joined them, also were watching.

At length a large boat came in sight. Guss had with difficulty found boat and men, the latter were pulling with all their might. They took Seton on board, then made for the point as fast as they could row.

Rounding this point a more distant one came

in view, and between the two was the punt . . . empty!

They rowed to the shore and the woods resounded with their shouts, but . . . there was no answer; only the echoes of their own voices returned to them, and died away among the reeds and rushes of the lake.

Other boats were sent for, and other men came to assist in the search; but it was hours before the bodies of Gladys and the chasseur were found.

All that had happened remained a matter of surmise. Presumably, Gladys after entering the woods must have crossed the little peninsula to where a tree, half fallen, stretched itself over the water, on to this tree she had stepped to get a better view of the lake, and from there she had slipped. Then it must have been that the old chasseur had heard her cry as she fell, and therefore hastened to help her.

If it was really her voice that Seton had heard calling to him for aid, most likely she had clung for a time to the submerged boughs of the tree, but eventually exhausted, she had sunk, the current was very strong. The old chasseur had probably arrived in time to see where she went.

down, and tried to save her. They were found lying together at the bottom of the lake in a cavity into which an eddy had swept them.

Other than this was mere guess work; no detail can ever be known—they were dead.

The old man had died doing his duty.

* * * * * *

It seemed to Seton impossible that Gladys could be dead. Even when laid in her coffin, her sweet face surrounded by flowers, only the ice cold that shivered his lips as he kissed her told surely the life was extinct. Then a dull numb feeling came over him; it was as though all light had gone out, as though the great sun had become a black shadow; his love, his life, Gladys . . . was dead!

As much as he felt or desired anything, he wished that he, too, had been drowned . . . How cool and pleasant such death would be . . how sweet to be there with her instead of living on with this fever in his brain, this blank desert around him.

Gladys had fallen asleep for ever Such was the impression received by those who stole in to see her sweet face once more.

* * * * * *

They buried her in that little graveyard in the forest, over which the pine trees still solemnly watch. Close by where Mrs. Mayford's baby was laid, they placed her. And over the tomb a fair white cross was erected to mark where Gladys shall lie till the archangel's trumpet shall sound.

* * * * * *

Mrs. Mayford led Seton away by the hand, and whispered low in his ear—"Do not grieve so, Mr. Herold, I shall soon join her, and the day will surely come when we shall all meet where there are no more tears or sorrow."

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A letter was lying on Seton's table the purport of which was, that Mrs. Warrington had died of heart disease, and had left Seton all the fortune she had inherited from his uncle.

FINIS.



